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FREER GALLERY OF ART
OCCASIONAL PAPERS

VOLUME THREE

NUMBER THREE

LI TI

By
RICHARD EDWARDS



PUBLICATION 4679

WASHINGTON

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TO
ARCHIBALD GIBSON WENLEY

FOREWORD

Further knowledge of the history of Chinese painting perhaps depends more on detailed studies of individual artists than on comprehensive volumes treating the whole field. Professor Edwards has already shown the importance of this line of investigation in his monograph on Shen Chou, *The Field of Stones*, Freer Gallery of Art Oriental Studies, No. 5, 1962, and we welcome the opportunity to publish another work from his learned pen. His scholarly and perceptive handling of the limited material available for the study of Li Ti throws new light on the life and work of that gifted and obscure Sung painter.

JOHN A. POPE

Director, Freer Gallery of Art

Washington, D. C.

April 8, 1965

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As this study has taken form slowly in connection with other work and over a rather long period of time, I am indebted to many for assistance. However, I would like to express particular gratitude to the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan (financed by the Ford Foundation) for research grants during the summers of 1962 and 1963 and to the United States Educational Commission in the Republic of China for a Fulbright Grant during the year, 1963-64, where residence on Taiwan enabled me to complete the final manuscript as well as to study thoroughly the unique collections of the National Palace and Central Museums to make certain that important Li Ti material was not overlooked. This occasion, too, offers me the opportunity to express my thanks for innumerable kindnesses to the staffs of the National Palace and Central Museums and particularly to Mr. Chuang Yen 莊巖, then Director of the Palace Museum (that contains all relevant Li Ti material on Taiwan), and who has since been appointed Deputy Director of the Joint Administration of both museums.

Permission for the reproduction of photographs has kindly been given by the following: Mr. John M. Crawford, Mrs. A. Dean Perry, The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, The Freer Gallery of Art, The Joint Administration of National Palace and Central Museums, Taichung, The Tokyo National Museum, The Yale University Art Gallery, and The Yamato Bunkakan. While all these photographs have been acknowledged as reproduced, I would like here to add my personal word of gratitude to Mr. Raymond A. Schwartz and the photographic staff of the Freer Gallery of Art, especially in bringing out some of the details here shown.

As is self-evident, this publication could not have been realized without the Freer Gallery of Art and, while appreciation goes in general to its ever-helpful staff, I would like particularly to thank its Director, Dr. John A. Pope, for allowing the study to be published as an *Occasional Paper*; Mr. Lloyd Langford for editorial assistance; and Mrs. Aleita J. Mitchell for the invaluable service of assembling the index.

Finally, although not directly concerned with this work, I cannot close without voicing my longstanding admiration for and debt to the late Archibald G. Wenley, former Director of the Freer Gallery of Art, who was always so ready to encourage studies suitable for the

Occasional Papers and to foster the kind of close cooperation between the Freer Gallery of Art and the University of Michigan that could lead to such publication. Sorely as he is missed, it is hoped that this modest effort may help insure the continuation of his scholarly enthusiasms.

RICHARD EDWARDS

Ann Arbor
February 1965

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	v
Acknowledgments	vii
List of illustrations	xi
I. Early records	3
II. Paintings: Northern manner	11
III. Paintings: Hangchou Academy	23
IV. A late twelfth-century master	37
List of dated Li Ti paintings	43
Plates	45
Index	47

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(All plates at end of text.)

PLATE

1. Magpies and Hare. Ts'ui Po. 1061. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
2. Birds in a Thicket of Bamboo and Prunus. 12th century. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
3. Shrike on a Winter Branch. Signed Li Ti. 1187. Shanghai Museum.
4. Shrike. Li An-chung. *Ca.* 1110. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
5. Shrike. Detail of plate 3.
6. Bamboo and Rock under an Oak Tree. Signed Li Ti. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)
7. Bamboo and Oak. Detail of plate 1.
8. FIG. 1.—Travellers among Mountains and Streams. Detail. Fan K'uan. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
FIG. 2.—Travellers in the Mountains. Detail. Attributed to Kuan T'ung. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
9. Whispering Pines in the Mountains. Detail. Li T'ang. 1124. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
10. Birds in a Tree above a Cataract. Signed Li Ti. (Courtesy of Mrs. A. Dean Perry, Cleveland.)
11. Mandarin Ducks under Winter Trees. Anonymous. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
12. Landscape. Attributed to Li Shan. (Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.)
13. Birds on a Winter Tree. Anonymous. (Courtesy of John M. Crawford, New York.)
14. Herdboys and Buffaloes in a Rainstorm. Signed Li Ti. 1174. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
15. Kitten. Signed Li Ti. 1174. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
16. FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 15.
FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 14.
17. Hunter with a Pheasant Returning through the Snow. Signed Li Ti. (Courtesy of Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS—*Continued*

18. Hunter with a Hare Returning through the Snow. Signed Li Ti.
(Courtesy of Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.)
19. FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 14.
FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 17.
20. Boy with a Pheasant Returning through the Snow (Boy on a
Water Buffalo Carrying a Ring-Necked Pheasant). (Courtesy of
the Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington,
D. C.)
21. FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 18.
FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 20. (Reversed.)
22. FIG. 1.—Winter Buffaloes. Detail. Attributed to Yen Tzu-p'ing.
China.
FIG. 2.—Drunken Scholar Returning Home. Detail. Post-12th
century. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)
23. Dog. Signed Li Ti. 1197. Peking.
24. Hunters with Greyhounds. Detail. Attributed to Hu Huai.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)
25. Dog. Yüan dynasty. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston.)
26. Two Chicks. Signed Li Ti. 1197. Peking.
27. Detail of plate 6.
28. Red Hibiscus. Signed Li Ti. 1197. (Courtesy of National
Museum, Tokyo.)
29. White Hibiscus. Signed Li Ti. 1197. (Courtesy of National
Museum, Tokyo.)
30. Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.) Signatures
courtesy of the respective collectors.
FIG. 1.—From plate 6.
FIG. 2.—From plate 10.
31. Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.) Signatures
courtesy of the respective collectors.
FIG. 1.—From plate 17.
FIG. 2.—From plate 18.
32. Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.) Signatures
courtesy of the respective collectors.
FIG. 1.—From plate 14.
FIG. 2.—From plate 15.
33. Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.) Signatures
courtesy of the respective collectors.
FIG. 1.—From plate 28.
FIG. 2.—From plate 29.

LI TI

I. EARLY RECORDS

Historical records and inscriptions on paintings tell us that a Chinese artist called "Li Ti" 李迪 lived in the twelfth century—not just a part of it, but to all intents and purposes during all one hundred years of it. Aside from problems of longevity, the life and artistic personality of Li Ti offers further interest since he lived and worked at least in his most mature years during a time of familiar artistic accomplishment, namely the Southern Sung. It is a period which beyond question is generally recognized for its special vision, particularly in the art of painting.¹

But little has been done to define the details of this Southern Sung period, and statements of general historical validity inevitably obscure the possibility of there being unique artists who, while they may conform in

¹ For example: "Landscape painting had changed. . . . Much of the painting of the twelfth century seems more consciously directed towards the capture of a mood; the conceptions are more soft and less severe. There were new experiments in atmospheric perspective. . . ." Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, Baltimore, 1956, p. 130. "The typical styles of Southern Sung . . . the Lyric and later the Spontaneous." Sherman Lee, *Chinese Landscape Painting*, Cleveland, 1962, p. 31.

"The very elegance of those small 'gems' . . . betrays a certain sweetness." Or a negative psychological comment: "It does not correspond to anything that torments us." J. P. Dubosc and A. Malraux, respectively, quoted in William Willems, *Chinese Art*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958, vol. 2, pp. 521–22.

". . . the style in itself is decorative, eyecatching and easily imitated in its outward aspects. . . ." Michael Sullivan, *An Introduction to Chinese Art*, California and London, 1960, p. 152. Or the positive division in the Chinese accounts that defines the beginning of the period (in political terms, but very clear nevertheless): Nan tu hou 南渡後 ("After crossing to the South"). See for example, table of contents in Hsia Wen-yen 夏文彥, *T'u-hui pao-chien 圖繪寶鑑*, 1365.

some respects to such broad aesthetic tenets, must also be thought of as distinct individuals creating individual paintings. General statements about art and art history need this kind of support and challenge. Art is endlessly concerned with particular discoveries at particular times, and only with such concrete understanding can confident yet cold generalities assume proportions of possible existence—in a word, become valid. Then, can Li Ti, a specific and concrete artist, be drawn out of the general obscurity—birds and insects, misty eye-level landscapes, tight architectural sketches, moonlight and flowers—the fragrance of a delicate, careful time?

From surviving evidence we are asked to know Li Ti as a painter who eminently fits into a pattern of intimate, meticulous painting, a creator of birds, of flowers, of animals, rocks and bamboo, as an inferior at landscape. Is he, in fact, different from any other painter of a bird, a flower, a buffalo—any other inferior painter of twelfth-century landscapes?

There seems to be no early record to assure us that Li Ti was an important and recognized painter during his own lifetime, or even shortly after. Teng Ch'un's 鄧椿 famous *Hua-chi* 畫繼, which covers the ninety-four years prior to 1167 and includes a section on painters of bird and flower subjects, does not list him there among the twenty-four artists mentioned. This is, of course, in part a commentary on Teng Ch'un's taste, but had Li Ti been an outstanding figure, like Li T'ang in Teng Ch'un's landscape section, he might at least have earned a line of mention. Possible suggestions of the artist in two alleged Sung texts, Li Ch'eng-sou's 李澄叟 *Hua shan-shui chüeh* 畫山水訣 and Chao Shih-ku's 趙希鵠 *Tung t'ien ch'ing lu* 洞天清錄, have no sure reliability.

There is, however, an interesting listing of Li Ti's name in Chou Mi's 周密 account of institutions and customs at Hangchou during the Southern Sung, *Wu-lin chiu-shih* 武林舊事. Chou Mi (1232–1308), who served the Sung and then went into retirement after the Mongol conquest, lists ten artists of the academy. Here Li Ti takes his place with Ma Ho-chih 馬和之, Su Han-ch'en 蘇漢臣, Li An-chung 李安忠, Ch'en Shan 陳善, Lin Ch'un 林椿, Wu Ping 吳炳, Hsia Kuei 夏珪, Ma Yüan 馬遠 and Ma Lin 馬麟. (Perhaps Li T'ang and Liu Sung-nien are most conspicuous by their absence.) If chronology is meant by Chou Mi's order, it is interesting that Li Ti is placed between Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan and would have been thought important as a late, rather than early, twelfth-century artist. Finally, he is mentioned by T'ang Hou 湯厚 of the Yüan (in the 1320's) in another short list of Academy artists that form part of one of his comments in *Hua-chien* 畫鑑. But T'ang Hou is not much interested. Of those listed he only claims some knowledge of Li T'ang.²

² The effort to find some early history about Li Ti is worth a lengthy footnote, for it helps to prove how little we know about the artist except as a tradition. Li Ch'eng-sou, *Hua shan-shui chüeh*. I have used the text found in *Wang-shih shu-hua yüan* 王氏書畫苑, Shanghai, 1922 (reprint) pu-i 補益 section, ch. 2, 31–36. The chance mention of Li Ti rests on the possibility of a misprint, the conjecture that Li Po 李迫 should read Li Ti 李廸. At any rate, in this text is the following passage:

"During the end of the Shao-hsing period (ca. 1150–60) there was a commercial painter of a more recent generation, whose surname was Ts'ui 翟 and given name, Hsing-tsu 興祖, who imitated and made forgeries, although hardly getting the general idea. He would add inscriptions confusing anyone without the ability to judge authenticity.

"Wang Sheng's 王晟 landscapes were many and they were done in a very fine and meticulous style, indeed, worth looking at. During the Ch'ien-iao period (1165–74) at Chiang-hsia 江夏 (Wu-ch'ang) there was a com-

As a result, the first substantial account of his life comes from that standard compendium of 1365, Hsia Wen-yen's 夏文彥 *T'u-hui pao-chien* 圖繪寶鑑. He tells us of Li Ti as follows:

Li Ti: a native of Ho-yang 河陽. During the Hsüan-ho period (1119–26) he served as an official in the Painting Academy, re-

mercial artist surnamed Huang 黃, the 18th, who made (Wang Sheng) forgeries. To the present day it's a fact that people of Wu-ch'ang collect them. When Wang Sheng was alive he was quite a drinker and he seldom painted bamboo, flowers and birds. Ever since the time of Liu I 劉益, Li Po 李迫, Chao I 趙逸 and Liu Ch'un 劉春 creators (of this sort of painting) have applied thick colors, indeed like the work of women. Later generations know nothing of style and composition, having long lost sight of the truth. . . ."

This seems to be very fragmented material, but it does bring together a group of artists whose existence with the exception of two (Li Po and Chao I) can be readily affirmed (See *Chung-kuo hua-chia jen-ming ta-tz'u tien* 中國畫家人名大辭典, Shanghai, 1940, pp. 33, 657). Since there seems to be no Li Po and the altering of a single stroke would change Po 迫 to Ti 廸, one cannot help but feel that Li Ti may have been meant. The fact that another version prints the name Li Chui 追 confirms how easy it is to make such slips. Yü Chien-hua 俞劍華 *Chung-kuo hua-lun lei-pien* 中國畫論類編, Peking, 1957, vol. 1, p. 623. At least it is comment on the Li Ti type of painting.

The text is certainly corrupt and much doubted by Yü Shao-sung 余紹宋, *Shu-hua shu-lu chieh-t'i* 書畫書錄解題, Peking, 1932. It is a collection of not too well integrated statements. But Yü Shao-sung gives very unsatisfactory reasons for his rejection.

He notes the similarity to the text attributed to Li Ch'eng 李成, *Shan-shui ch'üeh* 山水訣. It is difficult to find out who Li Cheng-sou was. In this text he would have been someone over sixty in 1221. Another source says he lived in the Yüan. Yü Shao-sung also feels that a reference to Li 李 and Hsiao 蕭 is extremely unclear, particularly since there were so many artists named "Li." Further, he seems to think that the use of the term "later generation" 逸進 is confusing and that Li Ch'eng-sou who was himself of this generation could not have used it.

None of these arguments seems conclusive. The text may be corrupt and the date not exact, but it has some unusual consistencies (partially dealing with the area around Wu-ch'ang and the south from where Li Ch'eng-sou is alleged to

ceiving the title of Ch'eng-chung-lang 成忠郎. During the Shao-hsing period (1131-63) he once again became an official in the Painting Academy, receiving the rank of an Assistant Commissioner 副使. He was awarded the Golden Girdle. Subsequently he served the courts of Hsiao-tsung (r. 1163-90) and Kuang-tsung (r. 1190-95).

have come). Li and Hsiao are certainly Li T'ang and Hsiao Chao. In talking of the "younger generation" he is referring to artists, not his own friends (Yü Chien-hua also thinks this, *op. cit.*, p. 624).

It is the kind of text in which odd statements may prove valid. It seems hardly right to reject it completely.

The other reference is in an extremely doubtful part of a text originating with a Sung scholar who was a member of the imperial family, Chao Hsi-ku. Yü Chien-hua (*op. cit.*, p. 86.) considers he wrote this around 1190. The text occurs in several versions and under two different titles: *Tung-t'ien ch'ing lu* 洞天清錄 and later, *Tung-t'ien ch'ing-lu chi* 洞天清錄集. It is basically a collection of notes on things of antiquarian interest such as brushes, flutes, bells, paper, ink, stones, etc. One original early Ming edition, published in Hangchow (in the ts'ung-shu, *Chü chia pi pei* 居家必備, ts'e 24, compiled by Chü Yu 瞿祐 (1342-1428) has nothing about painting. A second, in the ts'ung-shu, *Shuo-fu* 說郛, ts'e 97 (originally compiled by T'ao Tsung-i 陶宗儀 ca. 1330-1400, reprint of 1646), is more complete and adds sections on painting. But it is certainly in only later editions (such as *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu* 美術叢書, 1928, ts'e 36; Li E 厲鶚, *Nan-Sung yüan hua-lu* 南宋院畫錄, quoting Tu Mu 都穆, *T'ieh-wang shan-hu* 鐵網珊瑚, ch. 1/4; Yü Chien-hua, *op. cit.*, p. 87) that the passage on Li Ti occurs:

"Today painters have ceased to be. At the time of the transfer to the South there still were the likes of Chao Ch'ien-li, Hsiao Chao, Li T'ang, Li Ti, Li An-chung, Su Ch'i 粟起, and Wu Tse 吳澤. But now skilled painters have ceased to be. They sketch in the appearance without any real sense of the spirit. . . ."

This is clearly tradition, not certain early history.

As for Chou Mi, see *Wu-lin chiu-shih*, 6/16a (In *Wu-lin ch'ang ku ts'ung-pien* 武林掌故叢編, compiled by Ting Ping 丁丙 (1832-1889), edition of 1883).

For T'ang Hou's *Hua-chien* mention see *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, *op. cit.*, ts'e 85, p. 16b; or a recently published reprint with commentary, Peking, 1959, p. 52. In the foreword of this latter is a brief discussion about the date of the text.

He was skilled in painting flowers and birds, bamboo and rocks, indeed, quite capturing their essential life 頗有生意. His landscapes and small views were not as good.³

This succinct and clear-cut account of an artist is given further tangibility later in the same text by the statement that Li Ti had a son who was also an artist:

Li Te-mao 李德茂: (Li) Ti's son. Good at flowers and birds, hawks and wild scenery. Not up to his father. A *tai-chao* 待詔 of the Shun-yu era (1241-53).⁴

We thus have a substantial if brief picture of an artist of considerable prominence in the courts of four emperors whose skills were carried on by a son of similar, but slightly less, talents. Here is history which gives to Li Ti as solid a documentary base as is granted many early artists. It is only as we begin to count the years that certain doubts arise as to the complete accuracy of Hsia Wen-yen's "biography." As Siren⁵ has indicated, if Li Ti had reached an official position in the Hsüan-ho period of the early twenties he can hardly have been born much later than 1100. His service to four emperors would extend his life close to the very end of the century, for the last of these emperors, Kuang-tsung, ruled from 1290 to 1295. This ideal picture of auspicious long life might possibly be believed were we not asked, in addition, to accept the fact that the son of such a prominent official painter

³ Hsia Wen-yen, *T'u-hui pao-chien*, 1365, ch. 4 (edition of 1366 from Harvard-Yenching Library). Ch'eng-chung-lang would be merely an honorary title, while that of Assistant Commissioner (Fu-shih) implies a position of importance and administrative duties. I am indebted to Professor Yang Lien-sheng of Harvard University for this clarification.

⁴ Idem, ch. 4, Commercial Press edition, p. 83.

⁵ Siren, *Chinese Painting*, New York and London, 1956-58, vol. 2, p. 87. Later his life span is given as "B. c. 1100, d. after 1197," vol. 3, p. 63. See also M. Loehr, *Chinese Paintings with Sung Dated Inscriptions*, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 4, 1961, p. 261.

was himself officially recognized as a *tai-chao* only in the middle of the thirteenth century. Father and son (if he could have had such a young son), two generations, span 150 years—and still going strong. Arithmetic is at least at fault. Nor would this have been the first instance of inaccurate dating in Chinese recordings about artists. Even as great a scholar as Su Shih (Su Tung-p'o) apparently could care little for specific matters of time in art history.⁶

Because of the lack of clear early records, it is only gradually, not unlike the definition of objects emerging in the distance of a Southern Sung landscape, that "Li Ti" takes form in biographical sources. Not until the very end of the Sung, at the earliest, may he be considered an indispensable part of the history of painting at Hang-chou. One must then add another hundred years before our view is really clear. By this time Li Ti comes to us as a kind of tradition, not sufficiently important to have been maintained in accurate biographical terms, but indeed substantial enough as an idea—where he came from, where he worked, and at about what time—to retain our continued belief in him.

It is now that we can add a final bit of recorded information: He also painted dogs. This is actually a late Ming comment, but it is based on the fact that the famous fourteenth century poet, Kao Ch'i 高啓 (1336–1374), wrote a quatrain as a colophon for one of Li Ti's paint-

⁶ He and another Sung scholar, Yeh Meng-te 葉夢得, ascribed to the T'ang artist, Li Ssu-hsün, a painting which involved Ming-huang's traveling to Szechuan in 756. Since Ming-huang's journeying took place long after the death of Li Ssu-hsün (perhaps as late as 722), the latter could not have painted the picture. Certainly Li Chao-tao could have been named as the artist if these scholars had considered such matters of much importance. See Li Lin-ts'an, *A Study of the Masterpiece, 'Tang Ming-huang's Journey to Shu'*, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 4, 1961, pp. 316–319.

ings of this subject, and we are thus in the fourteenth century brought into the area of the art itself.⁷

⁷ The comment comes from the seventeenth century in Chu Mou-yin 朱謀聖 *Hua-shih hui-yao* 畫史會要. In an original edition of 1631, ch. 3/9b-10a, the passage reads:

"Li Ti: from Hoyang, flowers and birds, bamboo and rocks, quite capturing their essential life (sheng-i 生意). Also painted dogs. Kao Chi-ti 高季迪 (Kao Ch'i 高啓) wrote a colophon (for one) in the poetry form of 'broken-off lines' (*chüch-chü* 絕句)."

The quatrain is in *Ch'ing-ch'iu shih chi-chu* 青邱詩集注 (Ssu-pu pei-yao 四部備要 edition), Shanghai, 1933, ch. 16/11b. For the poetry form, one noted for its conciseness and concentration of meaning, see J. R. Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature*, Cambridge, Mass., 1950, pp. 65-66.

II. PAINTINGS: NORTHERN MANNER

Interestingly enough there has been preserved to the present time a small group of paintings attributed to Li Ti, of which some show unmistakable affinities to styles of the late Northern Sung, and others show the very essence of that precise and meticulous taste for the careful selection and recording of the immediately visible that we can so justly associate with later twelfth-century academic painting. Again, as in the case of the biographical facts, are we dealing with a single artistic personality?

Some attributed paintings can be readily dismissed as having little to do with the period.⁸ There are at least four, however, of apparent high quality that suggest a basis in the Northern Sung and that would seem to have no connection with obvious Southern Sung taste: "Shrike on a Winter Branch," formerly in the collection of P'ang Yüan-ch'ü and now in the Shanghai Museum, dated 1187; "Bamboo and Rock under an Oak Tree," in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; "Birds in a Tree above a Cataract," formerly owned by Mr. C. C. Wang of New York, and now in the possession of Mrs. A. Dean Perry in Cleveland; and "Birds on a Winter Tree," in the John M. Crawford collection, also in New York (plates 3, 6, 10, and 13).

⁸ One thinks particularly of "Dove, Tree and Flowers" in the Palace Museum, Taichung. See *Ku-kung shu-hua chi* 故宮書畫集, Peking, 1929-37, no. 31. It is signed "Ho-yang Li Ti" 河陽李迪 and has his alleged seal. There are other paintings very similar in style piously given to even rarer masters, namely Hsü Hsi and Chao Ch'ang. Siren, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pls. 138, 141, 244. In addition, there is a whole series of "Li Ti" paintings in the rich collection of album leaves in the Palace Museum at Taichung. It is doubtful that any, beyond what is discussed below, can claim more than a weak traditional relationship to the artist. *Ku-Kung shu-hua lu* 故宮書畫錄, Taipei, 1956, vol. 3, ch. 6, pp. 164, 185, 187, 190, 195, 203, 219.

Judging from not inferior reproductions of "Shrike on a Winter Branch," we are dealing with a rather noble hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk some three and a half feet high. An angle of land in the lower left is the implied support of an outcropping of snow-touched bamboo and leafless branch that rise upward to the top of the picture. This possible Li Ti painting immediately recalls at least two similar attempts at bird "landscapes" from the Palace Museum collection now at Taichung, Taiwan (Formosa): Ts'ui Po's "Magpies and Hare" of 1061 (plate 1) and "Birds in a Thicket of Bamboo and Prunus" by an unknown master apparently working in the first decades of the twelfth century (plate 2).⁹

These latter two paintings, however, clearly differ. Ts'ui Po's softness of ink and curving shapes of land and tree and leaf inevitably create a picture whose nobility rests in the view of a nature somewhere pure and undisturbed, a nature believably alive with its own continuing mysteries: the sweep of late autumn winds, the screams of magpies and the patient bewilderment of a hare. For the "Birds in a Thicket," however, this sense of moving, living—even circular, recurring—nature has somehow disappeared. The land is created with line and wash which are both firmer in their specific definition and, in a rather nervous vibrant fashion, present more of that definition so that a kind of elemental grandeur is no longer sought. Rather than falling back easily in space, things inevitably tend to come forward. It is clearly a full and contrived arrangement, the end of which—in a screen of jagged land and bent grass, thorny twig and plum and sharp bamboo—is to create a varied twittering setting, a kind of busy statement of the nature of birds

⁹ These two paintings have become particularly well known as a result of being exhibited in America in 1961–62. See *Chinese Art Treasures* (Washington, Taipei), Geneva (Skira), 1961, nos. 23 and 33.

which the artist has seen as too noble in pose and feathery detail to be their own vehicles for such expression. Here, then, is a kind of abstraction, a clear artistic convention which stands in marked distinction to Ts'ui Po's view of "unspoiled" nature. Hui-tsung himself, whose art is the epitome of attainment in this kind of theme, despite all reputation for meticulous detail, so successfully abstracted both setting and bird as to create the complete imagery of a special timeless existence with which neither the foibles of man nor the arbitrariness of wild nature can possibly interfere.

A comparison of these two paintings clearly points, then, the direction to which academic painting in the twelfth century leads. In the light of such Northern Sung works we come to a clearer understanding of "Shrike on a Winter Branch" attributed to Li Ti (plate 3). Like "Birds in a Thicket," it transforms Ts'ui Po's nature into an insistent surface arrangement, yet without "busy-ness." This is partly because it is winter. Hence branch and bamboo, the rather sure empty angle of land are clearly in harmony with that season. The shrike, unmoving, is literally frozen on his cold setting, and the surface is further emphasized by a sprinkling on it of dots of Chinese white to simulate falling snow.¹⁰

¹⁰ The painting is reproduced as a hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 116.1 cm. by 53 cm. See *Shanghai po-wu-kuan tsang-hua* 上海博物館藏畫 (Collection of paintings in the Shanghai Museum), Shanghai, 1959, pl. III. Also in P'ang Yüan-chi 龐元濟, *Hsü-chai ming-hua lu* 虛齋名畫錄, Shanghai, 1909, ch. 7 it is recorded; in addition it has been reproduced in the illustrated volume of the collection, pt. 1, pl. 2. Its title in the former catalogue is given as *Hsüeh-shu han-ch'in t'u* 雪樹寒禽圖 ("Winter Bird on the snow-covered tree").

The use of spots of Chinese white to simulate snow may be a very old convention. It is present on a painting by the tenth-century painter, Chao Kan, now in the Palace Museum collection in Taichung. See *Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting in the Palace Museum*, Taipei, 1959, vol. 2, no. 50.

It is a painting not unlike Hui-tsung but lacking Hui-tsung's selectivity.

That it need not have been so in the twelfth century is suggested by a comparison with another painting of the same subject, Li An-chung's "Shrike" of about the year 1110¹¹ (plates 4 and 5). Since this latter painting is on a small fan format and only ten inches across, the artist's interest is somewhat altered and there is an inevitable concentration on the bird as opposed to his setting—the same setting, much abbreviated, of bare branch and sharp bamboo. (The very fact that artists could have a variety of approaches within an apparently similar theme is indeed instructive.) But Li An-chung's "Shrike" has a wonderful and continuing animation. This is the result not only of a beautiful series of curving shapes, from the tip of the beak over head and back and broad countersweep of the tail, to the varied curves of breast and wingtip, but also of the unbelievably soft and exact textures of varied feathered areas.

Although the artist in the "Shrike on a Winter Branch" has used the same technical means for defining the lightness of the bird—namely ink-wash to darken the background and cause the feathery life to subtly glow forth in contrast to it—he has in no sense seen the bird with the same soft delight. The shrike with the Li Ti signature is fixed, remote, stark, perhaps appropriate for winter, but somehow caught, stopped, rather than alive with the accepted and easy continuities of uninterrupted nature.

Li An-chung's view, then, is far closer to Ts'ui Po; another way of expressing it might be to suggest that "Shrike on a Winter Branch" is again a more academic

¹¹ See *Chinese Art Treasures*, no. 34. Seals and inscription seem clearly to indicate this dating.

performance. It is more of a pattern, far less of a direct view of the uncontrived aliveness of something in marvelous nature itself. In terms of time, it is more of a moment, less of a continuum. Li Ti must have been strongly affected by the Academy.¹² But one of the difficulties of associating "Shrike on a Winter Branch" with Li Ti comes from the inscription and the date that it holds.

The inscription dates it in the year 1187 and involves us in something of the ambiguities already implicit in literary accounts of the artist. This takes us to the south and the closing years of the reign of Hsiao-tsung. Are we to think of the style of Hui-tsung's Academy as something still lingering some seventy years later in the unique and certainly different environment of the southern capital of Hangchou? Accepting the "academic" quality of this late Northern Sung style painting, it is perhaps not beyond possibility that Li Ti would have turned back to the recreation of older forms, perhaps of his youth. Not having seen the original, it is difficult to judge it accurately, but as we shall see, paintings dated both before and after "Shrike on a Winter Branch" generally show a different style.

The second painting that evokes the possibility of Li Ti as an artist with strong Northern Sung affinities is the small square of silk in the Boston Museum (plate 6). On this the artist has very skillfully arranged a close-up view of oak and rock and bamboo. Two tiny wiry characters in a void of untouched silk along the right-hand edge declare "Li Ti" as the artist. A bold bright red seal in the upper center carries an imperial mark—perhaps as early as Hui-tsung, perhaps as late as Yüan Wen-tsung 文宗 (r. 1328–32)—the name of a palace building,

¹² So, of course, was Li An-chung. But in this and a few other paintings Li An-chung emerges as a significant individual painter with a subtly different style.

Jui-ssu tung ko 睿思東閣.¹³ The subject once again recalls Ts'ui Po's famous masterpiece. For here, too, one can find bamboo and oak, although in the Boston picture a rocky outcropping in the lower right takes the place of Ts'ui Po's sweeping contours of land. While, also in contrast, there are no actors—no birds, no animals—the painting still may justly be compared to the painting of 1061 (plate 7). Bamboo is treated with the same outline (often drawn to thin single points) and oak-bark is a combination of dark line and thick wash along the edges, giving a sense of three-dimensional roundness; there are spotted touches of ink for knothole and bark roughness on the surface of this rather solid three-dimensional shape.

The Boston album leaf, however, has none of that quality of a curving windswept nature that is so much a part of the life of the earlier painting. Basic shapes of rock and tree have (as with "Shrike on a Winter Branch") become fixed patterns on the surface of the silk. In this very careful feeling for surface arrangement there is a calculated and just balance between areas that are filled and areas that are empty. Thus the empty area in the lower left corner is comparable to the solid rock in the lower right, while the silk at the top is a just counterpoise

¹³ H. C. Tseng of the Boston Museum has pointed out to me that this belongs to Hui-tsung. Max Loehr, following R. H. van Gulik, suggests Kao-tsung (*op. cit.* A. O., vol. 4, p. 222. A seal with this name is found on paintings dated 1091, 1107.). The building in Kaifeng, dating from 1075, was called both a *ko* 閣 and a *tien* 殿. Recently, Wai-kam Ho of the Cleveland Museum, who has discovered a good deal of material on the subject, has written me that there was also such a name for a building in the inner palace at Hangchou; and that there is in addition the possibility of the seal having been used as late as the Mongol Emperor, Wen-tsung.

The painting itself is in ink and slight color on silk, 24.2 cm. by 25.7 cm. It is published in Tomita, Kojirō, *Portfolio of Chinese Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 1933, pl. 72. A seal in the upper left, *Tu-sheng shu-hua chih yin* (?) 都省書畫之印 (?), is said to be a fourteenth-century seal connected with the office of the Prime Minister of the Yüan.

to the overhanging oak branch. Granting the possibility of damage to the silk and that we are not necessarily dealing with the exact original size, the strip of emptiness along the left edge is still, however, balanced by the vertical definition of tree trunk on the right.

The surface arrangement, as opposed to any feeling for spacial recession or depth, is one of the main characteristics of this small album leaf. A second is that, within this calculated frame, the artist has taken a very clear interest in the definition of detail and has created thereby a very lively animation of that surface. Here are not, however, the rather swift sweeping touches of Ts'ui Po. Dots on bark, dancing staccato outlines of leaf, the restless contours of the rocky outcropping, and the sharp contrasting spikes of bamboo are rather special. They are further enhanced by a tonal arrangement whereby areas of wash are often stopped just before they reach a dark outline so that there may be a sharp area of light on the edge of an oak leaf or contour of a rock. The leaves themselves have a slight greenish tinge to the ink and a slight warm wash on their light-faded edges.

This trick of leaving a light area next to a black edge is one that may be found in several well-accepted Northern Sung paintings. Particularly it can be found in Fan K'uan (plate 8, fig. 1) and is exploited at times by Li T'ang in connection with his bold use of axe-stroke *ts'un* (plate 9). It is not out of place to recall that Li Ti is reported to have come from Ho-yang, which was also Li T'ang's native place, and they might well have shared similar interests. But there are no *ts'un* here and the line that defines the contours of the rock takes on a curious nervous vibrant character—now thick from the pressure of the brush, now thin from its release. This, too, may be found in the Northern Sung, particularly on a landscape from the Palace Museum, in execution perhaps rather opti-

mistically attributed to Kuan T'ung (plate 8, fig. 2).¹⁴

In a word, what is here bears a clear relationship to the Northern Sung. But just as the older and more forceful Li T'ang was at this time concerned with an effort "to solidify wandering and indefinite tendencies,"¹⁵ so this artist—perhaps Li Ti—has been clear in crystallizing his arrangement on the silk and insistent in his definition of detail. He does not use Li T'ang's new axe-stroke "invention"; yet this is no soft and easy scene, but a bit of nature crisply and positively ("academically") described, and through the very clarity of that description, it receives a special animation.

The slightly worn "Li Ti" signature is not, however, entirely convincing (plate 30, fig. 1). The thin lines of the calligraphy are hardly in harmony with the strong definition described above. It seems too patently an afterthought. More believable signatures are somehow more readily integrated with pictorial elements. Might we not hypothesize that knowing the tradition an early connoisseur added "Li Ti" to affirm it?

An analysis of the Boston picture can lead us in two directions: one toward the Southern Sung, where Li Ti is alleged to have moved with the court; one in the direction indicated by the two paintings in New York and Cleve-

¹⁴ One might compare it, too, with the foreground rocks in the Cleveland Museum's twelfth-century "Streams and Mountains without End," particularly those foreground rocks to the left of the boat that is approaching the landing about a third of the way along the scroll. Sherman Lee and Wen Fong, *Streams and Mountains without End*, Ascona, 1955, the fold-out reproduction.

The treatment of rocks in various early paintings is interestingly highlighted by James Cahill, *Some Rocks in Early Chinese Painting*, Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America, 1962, vol. 16, pp. 77-87. The Boston "Li Ti" does not exactly "fit" any of the rocks detailed here but comes closest to plate 7 (att. Kuan T'ung), plate 10 (Yen Wen-kuei) and plates 12 and 13 (Fan K'uan).

¹⁵ Richard Edwards, *The Landscape Art of Li T'ang*, Archives, vol. 12 (1958), p. 55.

land, "Birds in a Tree above a Cataract" (plate 10) and "Birds on a Winter Tree" (plate 13).¹⁶ Both of these latter paintings treat the same theme: two birds perched on a bare branch in a lonely setting far off above the cold rush of a mountain waterfall. The first, owned by Mrs. A. Dean Perry, is signed on the light rock at the lower left corner—again tiny wiry characters like those on the Boston picture but not identical (plate 30, fig. 2). The other has only a traditional attribution.

Mrs. Perry's picture certainly has aspects common to the Boston album leaf. It, too, is an insistent surface arrangement which only grudgingly creates a shallow space for the dramatic plunge of water and the dim suggestion of part of a far bank. The contours of the foreground rocks are likewise similar in shape and done with an angled brush in nervous vibrant fashion, deep black and strong—so, too, is the lively twisting tree shape. In this the bark texture is different, but certainly such a change is to be attributed to the nature of cypress bark as opposed to that of an oak. Outlined bamboo adds its crisp dancing shape as well. The waterfall is a rather looser, sketchier treatment of a more precise Southern Sung curve of water well known in Japan.¹⁷ The dark and nervous outline

¹⁶ "Birds in a Tree above a Cataract," album leaf, ink and light colors on silk. 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches by 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. See J. Cahill, *The Art of Southern Sung China*, Tokyo, 1962, no. 8, p. 31. "Birds on a Winter Tree," album leaf, ink and light colors on silk. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. See Laurence Sickman (and others), *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, New York, 1962, no. 29, p. 85, pl. 19.

¹⁷ The famous "Waterfall" owned by the Chishaku-in 智積院 in Kyoto. Harada Kinjirō, *A Pageant of Chinese Painting*, Tokyo, 1936, pl. 214; or more recently, Tokyo National Museum, *Sōgen no kaiga 宋元の絵畫*, Tokyo (Benrido), 1936, pl. 101 and p. 28.

An interesting water-study attributed to Li Ti is found in an album leaf in the Palace Museum in Taichung, the ninth leaf of an album, "Ming-hui chi-chen" 名繪集珍. *Ku-kung shu-hua lu*, 6/p. 165.

of rock and tree is close to that in the Palace Scroll, "Birds in a Thicket," which has been discussed above (plate 2). One suspects, then, that we are in the twelfth century and close enough to the Boston painting and academy traditions to maintain the validity of a will-o'-the-wisp Li Ti.

That the tradition is somewhat loose is further indicated by another square album leaf, this time in the Palace Museum at Taichung, "Mandarin Ducks under Winter Trees" (plate 11). The painting is in ink and color on silk but has no signature.¹⁸ A label that goes with it, however, gives it—no doubt because of the subject matter—to the early Sung priest, Hui-ch'ung 惠崇. Yet in style it is extremely close to the painting in Cleveland. Not only is the format similar, but it is the same theme of paired birds in a setting of single angled tree rising from rather flat light rocks or land—shifting shapes against the dark-washed sky. And such details as the black jagged outlines of the light rocks and the multiplication of spiky-tipped outlined bamboo leaves carry resemblances far beyond generalities.

There is, however, a softer atmospheric quality about the Cleveland painting, and one wonders if, because of this, one is not stepping too far in the direction of a kind of brooding, dramatic intensity to be able to accept it as consistent with Li Ti's alleged academic orthodoxy. Here are indications—the juxtaposition of dark haze and crisply dancing forms—that lead us into slightly different worlds. It is too much to resolve these questions here, but one might explore "Birds in a Tree above a Cataract" in relation to other twelfth-century paintings in the Northern Sung style or occasional painters of the Chin

¹⁸ *Ku-kung shu-hua lu*, 6/p. 193-94. It is number 14 in an album entitled "Sung-Yüan ming-hui" 宋元名繪. It measures 23.8 cm. by 25.

such as Li Shan 李山 in which qualities of strong drama and brooding loneliness are not absent¹⁹ (plate 12).

"Birds on a Winter Tree" (plate 13) continues the same subject and is proof of the general validity of the tradition that makes Li Ti the author of it. In this case, the trees recall Li Ch'eng and Kuo Hsi, and, with something of an effort to catch the drama noted in the last picture, they are busily intertwined. This drama is increased by the way the branch leans perilously over the void, beneath which one can dimly see the top of a cataract. Yet it is too busy and too hesitant to be justly connected with the Northern Sung, nor is it close to the perfect quiet taste of the twelfth-century south. One feels that the anonymous critic who suggested the name of Li Ti might well have been more subtle and thought of Li Ti's son, Li Te-mao, and how the son had the reputation in the fourteenth century of being a thirteenth-century painter who was skilled at painting not only birds and flowers, but also "wild scenery."

¹⁹ One thinks here particularly of "Wind and Snow in the Fir-Pines" from the collection of Mrs. Eugene Meyer (Cahill, *Southern Sung*, no. 5); the album-leaf at the Yale University Art Gallery reproduced here which has a Li Shan attribution. "A Snow-Covered Landscape," Louise Hackney and Yau Chang-foo, *A Study of Chinese Paintings in the Collection of Ada Small Moore*, London, New York, Toronto, 1940, no. XXX, 7; perhaps even passages of the large hanging scroll, "Mountain and River Landscape" in the Freer (16.552) again, only attributed. Two other scrolls that show suggestions of the orthodox stream of things and yet have a kind of off-beat flavor that seem to relate them to the Chin are: "Chao Yü's Pacification of the Barbarians" in Kansas City (Cahill, *Southern Sung*, no. 6 and H. C. Tseng, *Loan Exhibition of Chinese Paintings*, Toronto, 1956, no. 2); and Wu Yüan-chih's "The Red Cliff" in the Palace Museum, Taichung (*Chinese Art Treasurers*, no. 46).

III. PAINTINGS: HANGCHOU ACADEMY

It is time now to turn in another direction: namely, to those paintings not only associated with Li Ti but clearly connected with the period when the court had been moved to the south. The majority of these bear dated inscriptions, the earliest of a time corresponding with 1174 on the western calendar (plate 32, figs. 1 and 2). Admitting the vagaries of time and its arbitrary destruction of early masterpieces, one is still prompted to ask, "What was an important court artist doing for approximately the first fifty years of southern rule?"

There are two extremely skillful and not unrelated paintings from this year of 1174. Both are in the Palace Museum, now at Taichung. One is a large hanging scroll, "Herdboys and Buffaloes in the Rainstorm" (plate 14). The other is a small square album leaf picturing a "Kitten" (plate 15). Both are on silk; both mingle colors with meticulous definition in ink.

One is immediately impressed by the large size of "Herdboys and Buffaloes" (47½ inches by 40¼ inches), for not many fine paintings of this dimension have survived from the period. Whereas it is just under four feet high, it is only seven inches less in width (a breadth which necessitates the careful joining of two bands of silk). The result is an almost square format, a shape which might be looked upon as an enormously enlarged album leaf.²⁰

²⁰ The inscription above the painting is by Li-tsung (r. 1225-64). It has also early Ming seals. The painting has often been published. For a rundown of essential facts, see Max Loehr, *op. cit.*, A. O. vol. 4, p. 254-55.

Here it should be pointed out that there is much scholarly opinion which considers the painting to be of Ming execution. Certainly there is a kind of surface quality even a "slickness" to certain aspects of it, that would suggest that it is

It is a kind of landscape, but certainly not one in which a landscape potential is exploited to any degree. There is, for example, no interest in distance. But since we have already been told that Li Ti's landscapes "were not as good" as more intimate studies, we can accept water and land and rock as merely a kind of brief stage to establish a believable basis for the existence of the artist's main concerns: buffaloes and herdboys and willow.

Two things impress us about Li Ti's treatment of these main themes. One is the tremendous concern for the things themselves. There is no escaping here an exactitude of definition, partly in the shapes, as in the animal's sure outline, but more specifically in the care and skill with which textures themselves have been defined: smooth, tough buffalo hide with thousands of small individual bristles harmoniously swirling in whirlpool-like movement, the straw of a raincoat, the infinite repetition of brushstroke—green and grey—to create the richness of a summer willow. Second, along with this love of the thing itself, is a compulsion to see it balanced precariously at a single point in time. One is aware of wind, and wind is a passing thing—however recurring. Angled line of willow on one side and the implied horizontal path of the buffaloes insistently funnel us from the left to a concentrated point at the right where the herdboys' hat is caught in mid-air. In another second it will be out of the picture.

Matter may be infinitely wondrous. Its details defy perception, but is not the mystery intensified to know all only as a moment? And everything is grace and delight:

not the unmistakable recognized type of Southern Sung painting. We know relatively little, however, about such Southern Sung painting on a large format, and at least it would be a very close copy of a Li Ti painting. Any copy has a double life. It must partake of the thing copied as well as subtly reveal its own time. Here the painting is important for its Southern Sung qualities and is so discussed.

the grace of curving shapes, the delight of the easy informal poses of the herdboys, and a basic dignity which is from the nobility of each carefully recorded thing.

The artist is, then, interested in stressing the importance of things—momentary living things. Who therefore is to deny the importance of a kitten? A kitten is a trivial thing, but so is an unknown herdboy losing his hat.

The “Kitten” (plate 15) bears an inscription dating it in the same year as “Herdboys and Buffaloes in the Rainstorm” (plate 14). It is only a small album leaf (9¼ inches by 9½ inches).²¹ Making use of a technique we have noted before whereby the silk is darkened so that the subject glows on the surface as a delicate lighter substance, the kitten is posed, like the lead buffalo, as a shape that turns back on itself, one paw softly raised, delicately alert. It is the pose of a moment, the insignificant action of an insignificant thing, except that the artist has treated this kitten with infinite care—grey-green eyes with a studied glint of gold pigment. Moreover the care in rendering the fur (plate 16, fig. 1) may be compared to the care in rendering willow leaves (plate 16, fig. 2). In each is a comparable animation of tiny dancing curving shapes. The moment is alive.

Even granted that the signatures do not match at every point (at least one is not traced from the other), they are close, and it would be hard to deny that an artist motivated by extremely similar ideals is at work on both of these paintings.

In the Yamato Bunkakan now at Nara are a pair of small paintings of the same general subject, “Hunters Returning through the Snow” (plates 17 and 18). Mounted as hanging scrolls, they are, however, only

²¹ Again, a description of essential facts in Max Loehr, *idem*. It has since been published in *Chinese Art Treasures*, no. 39, p. 95.

album-leaf size, and so again in the medium of ink and silk and occasional color we are confronted with a partial intimate view of the world. The paintings have an illustrious history in Japan going back to the days of the Ashikaga Shoguns and consequently are extremely well published.²² One of the two is generally considered to be inferior (plate 18), apparently the careful work of another hand made in order to have a fitting pair. The parts are not as surely integrated. There is a broken quality to the line which extends even to the signature (plate 31, fig. 2). Nor is it as beautifully spare and selective, not as "natural" with a more awkward buffalo and the angled hunter "leading" the animal, rather than man being somehow carried along by the seemingly purposeless vagaries of this powerful unbridled creature.

²² Ink and color on silk. 23.6 cm. by 23.6 cm. *Kokka* 71 and 180; *Shimbi Taikan* 眞美大観 (selected relics of art in Japan, edited by Tajima Shiichi), Kyoto, 1899-1908, vol. 8; *Tōyō bijutsu taikan* 東洋美術大観 (masterpieces from the arts of the Far East, edited by Tajima Shiichi), Tokyo, 1908-20, vol. 8; Werner Speiser, *Meisterwerke chinesischer Malerei aus der Higashiyama Sammlung*, Berlin, 1958, pls. 3 and 4. Siren, *Chinese Painting*, pls. 253 and 254. *Kokuhō jiten* 國寶事典 (compiled by the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Properties), Tokyo (Benridō), 1962, p. 42. *Sōgen no kaiga*, no. 99, p. 27.

To my knowledge the most complete discussion of the pair is Yashiro Yukio 矢代幸雄, "'Buffaloes Going Home' by Li Ti" (in Japanese), *Yamato bunka* 大和文華, 1951, vol. 2, pp. 27-33. Professor Yashiro notes in particular the difference in style between this pair and the pair of Hibiscus dated 1197 in the Tokyo Museum. This also raises the question of the long life of the master, which seems not impossible (Wen Cheng-ming of the Ming dynasty is cited as a possible parallel). The author accounts for the disparity in style by suggesting that the Yamato Bunkakan buffaloes are in a Northern Sung style as opposed to the later fine brush of the Southern Academy. This is an interesting idea, but I find it difficult to accept as an indication of a time difference since the water buffalo is essentially a southern subject (as opposed to the ox). This does not exclude the subject from an earlier period, but I know of no examples of it in the Northern Sung, and the distinction here seems to be much more logically one of detail and lack of detail, perhaps of Academy and Ch'an rather than Southern Sung Academy versus Northern Sung Academy.

These distinctions, however, are extraordinarily subtle, and there is no escaping a general conformity to type. Moreover if the buffaloes of 1174 (plate 14) are to be taken as model, the paintings in Japan are of the same family. On one the platform with its hook of land at the left follows the same general ground-plan as in the Taichung painting. The other which shows us the hunter as a cold huddled shape on the back of the beast has a similarly leaning tree anchored at the right and gives to the empty platform of land a small foreground accent in one corner. Thus basic elements and their compositional arrangements in the pictures from Japan are extremely close to what we find on the larger scroll from China.

Finally, as already observed by Max Loehr,²³ a close comparison between the right-hand buffalo in "Herdboys and Buffaloes in the Rainstorm" and one of the hunters and buffalo from Japan (plate 19, figs. 1 and 2) shows a similarity in the handling of the buffalo so close as to suggest that they were both culled from the same copy-book—the same pose for legs and head, the same few lines for ribs, the identical curved shape to the extended tail, the same sense of dark shading in the underparts and at the same spots. In fact, one might well be a copy of the other, and since the picture in Japan is a briefer recording (not a preliminary sketch, but something apparently based on earlier more careful studies), one would suggest that it is the "copy."

There are, however, other considerations. The paintings in Japan are set in winter. Clearly winter is not summer. Rich fullness in one is appropriately transformed into sparse brevity in the other. Moreover, whereas at least on first view the painting in China has all the qualities of a well-wrought "view" or exact "imita-

²³ Loehr, *op. cit.*, A. O., vol. 4, p. 255.

tion" of how things are in the world, in the Japanese examples the careful selectivity of elements, the clear attention to empty spaces of sky and snow, the broken brief definition of details when seen close at hand, without question, all relate this sort of painting to the well-known brevities and ambiguities of Ch'an Buddhism.

The paintings in Japan, then, present their own unique statement. Certainly it is a Ch'an-like subject. One is prompted to ponder: what hunters are these? Here is a travesty on the noble purposeful warriors—the exact skilled plainsmen of earlier traditions (plate 24). The same hare may be a by-product of this later hunt, but who could and would in his right mind set out on such purposes with the clumsy water buffalo as his companion with no saddle and no bridle? Much of Southern Sung Ch'an imagery is rooted in T'ang history, and this reminds us of the wisdom of the T'ang abbot, Pai-chang 百丈, when questioned by Ta-an 大安:

"I have been seeking for the Buddha, but do not yet know how to go on with my research."

"It is very much like looking for a buffalo when riding on one."

"What shall a man do after knowing him?"

"It is like going home on the back of a buffalo."²⁴

A final commentary on this type of painting is a small, tightly wrought scene in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, "Boy on a Water Buffalo Carrying a Ring-Necked Pheasant" (plate 20).²⁵ This nine-inch square of silk, done in ink and color, is clearly the same subject as that of the first Yamato Bunkakan painting. In a winter

²⁴ Quoted in Suzuki, Daisetz, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (second series), London, 1933, p. 59. It is from the first history of Ch'an, *Chuan-teng lu* 傳燈錄 (The transmission of the lamp). To fit the Southern Sung imagery I have taken the liberty of substituting "buffalo" for "ox" in Dr. Suzuki's translation.

²⁵ Published in James Cahill, *Chinese Album Leaves*, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., 1961, pl. VII. It has previously been connected on a loose traditional basis with the name of Li T'ang.

atmosphere the principal characters move from right to left across a foreground platform of land embellished by a leaning tree and a scattering of lesser shrubbery. The land rises higher at the right and on its crest touches of thin grass emerge from the snow. On the other hand, the buffalo itself is only a slightly stouter version of the animal in the second of the paintings in Japan (plate 21, fig. 1)—legs, tail, three-quarters view of head—as can be shown by a detailed photograph which reverses the pose (plate 21, fig. 2). And the universality of the subject in the academy is further affirmed by abstracting a part from a painting on the China mainland attributed to Yen Tzu-p'ing (plate 22, fig. 1)—again the lumbering low-headed buffalo on whose back is the mysterious rider.

The Freer painting is far more detailed than those in Japan and as such it points more toward the interest in careful recording found in the "Herdboys" from the Palace Museum. Yet despite detail, there is about it a marvelous sense of restraint. There is no confusion, so that one feels the exactitude of even the smallest things such as the tense curves of the willow fronds down to their very tips, or the certain, sharply edged path, and the crispness of pointed leaves of river grass and bamboo. Another way of expressing this quality would be to say that individual things are respected. No matter how much is included on this very beautiful planned stage, we do not react to it as "leaves," "fronds," or "twigs" except insofar as we are able to see *each* twig, *each* frond, and *each* leaf. In this painting we can so differentiate each separate fact. Nothing is crowded or massed. There are no "areas" as such—only surely delineated details, carefully selected, and justly placed.

Yet this is not all. The mysterious hunter is excessively tiny, the animal extraordinarily cumbersome, so that the

figure sits atop a veritable mountain of flesh. Something, then, takes it beyond a simple "normal" view but not so far as to be a mere travesty on man and beast (plate 22, fig. 2).

The Freer painting is not, however, one which is close enough to the brush of Li Ti to be attributed to him. It is rather a painting which affirms the "academic" nature of this subject. It is probably by an extremely skilled artist in the Hangchou Academy at the end of the twelfth century, working according to traditions that we best know in the art of Li Ti.

Work signed with the name "Li Ti," however, by no means stops at the still quite believable time of 1174. There are four small intimate paintings, which, if accepted as authentic, offer proof that to the very end of the century Li Ti was still working to affirm the endlessly fascinating reality of tiny carefully selected subjects, the continuing ability to recapture their significant life (plates 23, 26, 28, and 29). These are paintings of a "Dog" and "Two Chicks" now in Peking, and the well-known pair of flower studies, "Red Hibiscus" and "White Hibiscus," now in the Tokyo National Museum. They are all dated in the year 1197.

The "Dog" (plate 23), a slinking beast, un noble in pose, is perhaps related to the same great breed as the royal hunting dogs of a braver time (plate 24), and as hunting on a water buffalo is indeed a travesty on that noble pastime, so one is tempted to see the downgrading of one of man's finest hunting companions as part of a similar attitude. At any rate, the rich agricultural south is not for the plainsman. It is possible here to speculate on political meanings, and the idea of decline was cer-

tainly close to minds of Ming viewers. Although there is no evidence that he wrote about this dog, Kao Ch'i's quatrain might well apply. The poetry form of "broken-off lines" is one known for its terseness, and the lines are at once a statement about how Li Ti might have felt with half of China under the barbarians, and of Kao Ch'i expressing his own feelings of frustration in a world where he could not fully realize his genius:

護身偏吹客

花下臥晴莎

莫出東原獵

春來兔乳多

Guarding the children yet barking the guest;
Under flowers sleeps on clear-weather sedge.
No more out to hunt the eastern plains—
With spring the young hare, how many! ²⁶

But with all the innuendo suggesting that this painting may have personal or social meaning, it is clear that there still remains a very direct and sure reverence toward the animal itself, and much of what we have said about detail on buffalo or kitten could be applied here. Actually in pose it is very much like the slightly angled head-lowered shape of one of the Yamato Bunkakan buffaloes (plate 21, fig. 1). There is a definite interest in different textural surfaces: the lively furry lines around the neck, the tighter close-cropped texture of the body stretched lean over rib and vertebrae, and the long hairs of the tail.

It is instructive to compare such a painting with this

²⁶ See note 7. On Kao Ch'i see F. W. Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch'i*, Princeton, 1962.

theme surely executed by a different hand. In a soft and delicate work in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts an unnamed artist presents his "Dog" (plate 25). While it is unquestionably the same subject, the treatment is very different. It does not have that sureness of shape which would define it as a unique living thing. Sharpness of nose and exact definition of ear have gone. Against the faded mellow brown of the silk it seems scarcely to emerge from the background. The body itself is not of differing textures for different parts but is all one loose furry shape. The sparse hairs of the tail, for example, are only a kind of exaggeration of the neglected fur in other parts. About the whole there is an unmistakable awkwardness that goes beyond the slinking pose. This is particularly noticeable in the right foreleg, a curious stick that in no sense adds life to the body.

The painter of the Boston "Dog" has clearly stepped beyond the point of an admiration of nature as such. This lack of interest in an accurate mirroring of the physical world and at the same time an interest in defining overall softness and delicacy, an interest in ink texture in general (as opposed to the kind of textures that are specifically related to coat, flesh, and bone of dog) would seem clearly to take us into the area of Yüan taste. This is interestingly reenforced by the telling touch of red that is the dog's collar, for often in Yüan painting a rather bland composition will be accented by a single spot of red.²⁷

²⁷ Compare a description of a painting of birds which also may be considered Yüan: "An appropriate featheriness as well as density is produced by painting the pine needles in fine, superimposed strokes of the dry brush. The freedom and textural quality of none of these elements have any counterpart in the work of Sung bird and flower painters, or even in the repertory of the landscapists of the period." B. Rowland, Jr., *The Problem of Hui Tsung*, Archives, vol. 5 (1951), p. 13. Several paintings might be cited as examples of the interest of Yüan artists in all-over tones of grey ink accented by a touch,

There is perhaps less to analyze in the album leaf of "Chicks" (likewise in Peking) which has an inscription dating it in the same year (plate 26). But one cannot escape the rather marvelous way in which a very fragile and insignificant aspect of life is somehow given an ambiguously deeper meaning. Shape and arrangement are careful and deliberate. Here is the same pose of a figure turning back on itself that has often been a favorite of Li Ti. These two pause at a moment—beak open. Yet this moment implies a grander, more enduring order, for the pose is such as to hold the implied composition of a circle. This suggested geometry, formed by two beings who themselves are not too far from the egg, gives unmistakable monumentality to barnyard triviality, and we realize why, beyond a sentimental gesture, "Chicks" might be the important interest of a serious artist.

Here is a linking of the universal and the trivial, and indeed our whole perception is heightened by the rationally incongruous association of the two. But it must be admitted that a small subject reaches a very special and noble monumentality in the ten-inch squares of identical tightly woven silk in the Tokyo National Museum that reproduce two sprays of hibiscus—one with two rose-colored blossoms, one with two white blossoms (plates 28 and 29).

A flower, however, has never really been a trivial subject. In itself it is worthy of careful recording. Thus those questionings that come when confronted by in-

or touches, of soft red: Sheng Mou, "Noble Scholar in an Autumn Grove," Palace Museum (*Chinese Art Treasures*, no. 81); Chao Yung, "Landscape with Fishermen," Private collection, Cleveland (Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, pl. 113); Hsieh Po-ch'eng, "Gazing at a Waterfall," Crawford Collection, New York (*Ta-feng-t'ang ming-chi* 大風堂名蹟, Kyoto, 1955-56, vol. 4, pl. 24); Wang Meng, "Thatched Lodge in the Autumn Hills," Palace Museum (*Chinese Art Treasures*, no. 88). On this latter the red tones are not on the figures, but rather are used as discreet touches on the autumn foliage.

congruous hunting methods or insignificant chicks do not fundamentally arise.

One detects a normal Southern Sung arrangement in which the artist anchors his subject in one corner or the other, and the balanced pair—small, intimate, ordered—is (like the “Returning Hunter” in the Yamato Bunkakan) in complete harmony with Japanese tea-ceremony taste, to which we doubtless owe much in the way of its careful preservation. The technique has been described:

. . . individual petals of the blossoms have been drawn in the finest of line, but the heavy pink and white pigment covers and partially obscures this drawing. The style thus stands midway between the traditional outline-and-color-wash technique and the “boneless” manner of painting in color only, without outlines. . . .²⁸

“Red Hibiscus” and “White Hibiscus” are to be associated with the closing years of the twelfth century, as were the last two paintings considered. The writing of the inscriptions that date them in 1197 is extremely similar in both, but again, as in the writing of 1174, not identical (plate 33, figs. 1 and 2). The calligraphy on the red pair is slightly lighter and looser. Too, one may detect subtle differences in the two works. “White Hibiscus” has a greater compactness in the green-leafed angled branch, a crispness which is a particularly meaningful contrast to the blossoms whose dancing shapes and white purity, made vibrant by green-pigmented shadows, thus exist in a subtly tense, clear environment. The fine free drawing of the petals and the jagged edges of leaves are reverently exact. “Red Hibiscus” is a rather looser, more florid study, with leaves—both top view and under-side—a little scattered, stem subtly turning back on itself

²⁸ James Cahill, *Chinese Paintings*, XI–XIV centuries (Art of the East Library), New York, n.d., p. 24. The paintings are in ink and color on silk, 25.2 cm. by 25.5 cm. Also published in *Kokka* 26 and 134; Siren, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 3, pl. 245. *Sōgen no kaiga*, no. 53, p. 15.

(but like a flower, not an animal) so as to check the movement from left to right. Rose touches on the petals add, too, their accents to the all-inclusive liveliness of the painting, while over them may be drawn delicate lines of Chinese white; and warm rose lines are around the buds. There is, thus, a gentle, significant difference of effect conveyed by each. If one is to choose, standing before them, it is "White Hibiscus" that carries us most beautifully to that thin point where all is poised alone in a flower's complex transience.

It is doubtful, however, if we can express here a meaningful distinction between them as to artists' hands. If we accept both, along with "Dog" and "Two Chicks," as paintings by someone who calls himself "Li Ti" we extend the work of the master even beyond the limits set by Hsia Wen-yen, and we must consider him as serving yet another emperor, Ning-tsung, whose reign of three decades began in 1195.

IV. A LATE TWELFTH-CENTURY MASTER

However much the date of these paintings continues to stretch our credulity in the alleged life-span of an artist called "Li Ti," they do not really take us beyond a point where we may completely cease to believe in a consistency of style and expression. They are not far from his delight in surfaces, both detailed and alive, already shown in 1174. Furthermore, a comparison of the "Hibiscus" with the painting of "Bamboo and Rock under an Oak Tree" in Boston shows clearly how two paintings from the Southern Sung show interests like those indicated by a painting that follows closely Northern Sung traditions (plate 6, 27, 28, and 29).

In both the Boston and Tokyo pictures the artist has brought objects close to the surface for our exploration, has arranged them with an impeccably sensitive taste, and has then explored deep into the very nature of the things themselves, catching despite an outward calm a restless, nervous energy. He uses a line that defines edges as a curving, shifting, scalloped shape. He may bring a dark tone (the green shadows of an oak-leaf surface, the dark ink of a rock, the rose of a hibiscus petal) up to this same curving edge, only to drop it before it reaches this limit, thereby creating a vibrant bright contrast. This in turn may play against the sharp points of a leaf (bamboo or hibiscus), the thin shapes of a calyx. It is an art which respects things, which then may isolate those things, even silhouette them, and in that isolation see them as immediately and dramatically alive. It is not too much of an exaggeration here to see the rock as a flower. We cannot in turn see the flower as a rock, not because shapes

are essentially different, but because the imagery of a flower evokes concepts of life and growth, while the imagery of a rock is of a thing at first inert.

Here then we must reopen the unanswered question about "Shrike on a Winter Branch" of 1187 (plates 3 and 5). Is it possible that this should find its place among Li Ti's paintings? That Yashiro Yukio has seen the Yamato Bunkakan "Hunters Returning through the Snow" as executed in a Northern Sung manner²⁹ would help affirm the possibility of so labelling some of Li Ti's late twelfth-century art. Such winter scenes might well lead us to the starker kind of painting found in "Shrike on a Winter Branch." Here one could point out that the creation of trunk and twig and the relation of snow to them is strikingly similar in both; that there is no deep space; that the Li Ti interest in a form turning back on itself ("Kitten," plate 15) is found in the upper part of the tree; that the intensity which Li Ti gives to incidental life in other paintings is here transferred to the incredible stark stillness of the bird.

It is this last which in final analysis most imbues the scroll with a special character. The more one looks at the shrike, the more concentrated the artist's vision seems to be. Moreover, as we have indicated earlier, the feeling for nature—the capturing of a natural thing—is different from both Ts'ui Po and Li An-chung. It is sufficiently different to admit not only another hand but also a passage of time. This difference is in a direction toward which Li Ti's art points—the taut bird caught, stopped (like a turning buffalo or a chick) against the stark sky. There is then a special Li Ti meaning—the insistent revelation of the moment.

²⁹ Yashiro, *op. cit.*, see the latter part of note 22.

If Li Ti's northern manner is most surely related to his southern works in this scroll, other northern style paintings must, too, be considered within the range of his style. But how much they expand a tradition or how much they actually tell of the brush of Li Ti must, I think, until we know more about twelfth-century painting, remain something of a matter for personal judgment.

It is not unfair to point out that the certain actuality of Li Ti as an artist is partially screened from us by a two-fold barrier. One is the special kind of artistic tradition that surrounds China's painters. This almost instinctively recognizes the fact that great painters become so not because they can produce one painting, or just one type of painting. No great painter ever painted *the* painting. He painted many paintings. Yet destruction of these has been great. Lost masterpieces are countless. In partial compensation for loss, traditions about artists naturally grow. Attributions are readily made. Only because there are many paintings—no matter that they be improvisations—can an artist be "real." With Li Ti we have many paintings.

On the other hand is the tradition of history. This tradition demands clarity. Li Ti must fit his "niche." And since early criticism seems to have neglected him, when he did become somewhat important (in the fourteenth century), there was a large enough body of work, actual or attributed, to make him a complex artist. Looking back on the twelfth century, there were many artists who lived in the north and then moved to the south when Kaifeng fell. Several were named Li. What easier than to link Li Ti with this established pattern?

Tradition, however, cannot be wholly discarded. We must have some faith in the old opinions that helped shape it; however, it must be reformed. Thus, looking

at Li Ti from the present, we must reject early history insofar as that history is not sensitive enough to a believable span of time. One hundred fifty years is too much for father and son. It is far less easy to reject the complexities of existing paintings, both because they are physically before us and because, if they are of high quality, by the very fact of introducing complexities, they make the artist more, rather than less, of a believable creator.

However, in both history and in paintings, there is no sure basis for the existence of Li Ti as an artist in the time of the Northern Sung, or even in the early Southern Sung. All dated works, as well as meager literary sources, point only to Li Ti's importance at the end of the century. Thus Yonezawa Yoshiho would have him born in the early years of Kao-tsung, reaching full maturity fifty or sixty years later.³⁰ We might further give actual dates and suggest that the years *ca.* 1130-1200 would be the earliest to most logically encompass his life-span. Thus, if Northern Sung style paintings are to be accepted as by the hand of Li Ti, we must take the unorthodox position that such modes could exist in the late twelfth century. This is not an impossible solution.

A recently resurrected text, rather doubted in the past, claims to be a continuation of Teng Ch'un's *Hua-chi* and is thus called *Hua-chi pu-i* 畫繼補遺 ("Supplement to *Hua-chi*"). As such it includes brief statements about many painters of the Academy. Its author is perhaps a late Sung and early Yüan collector of books and paintings, Chuang Su 莊肅. But what is most interesting from our discussion of Li Ti is that its account of the artist does not conform to Hsia Wen-yen's "orthodoxy":

Li Ti: from Ch'ien-t'ang 錢唐. He served in the Academy of the emperors Hsiao-, Kuang-, and Ning-tsung (ruling 1163-1225).

³⁰ *Kokka*, 804, p. 104.

He painted a variety of subjects and when he brushed flying and walking things, flowers and bamboo, he quite captured their essential life 頗有生意. He was not much interested in landscapes and figures.

This, even to the declaration that he came from Hang-chou rather than the North, is far closer to the artist we have been able to reconstruct.³¹

Li Ti, then, becomes a fascinating figure in Southern Sung art because there is too much, often conflicting, material about him to dismiss his personality as just another name conforming to a common historical type. There may be too little to establish to our satisfaction exactly who he was, but as clear fact quickly fades toward the borderlands of tradition, we manage to sense the reality of the artist.

He emerges as a painter of specific life who takes delight in its momentary aspects. In fact it is the capturing, the skillful recording, and thus the monumentalizing of what is transitory that gives his art a special intensity. He works with a vocabulary of the unpretentious and he only paints in phrases. Yet on each occasion he elicits a particular response. The enigmatic buffalo, the stilled lonely shrike, a purring kitten, a beaten dog, the egg-shaped chick, perhaps a rock, a flower almost too full of fragile beauty . . . these are not just ordinary paintings about commonly acceptable themes. They might even, to turn Malraux's phrase, "torment" us a little.³²

As for his northern and southern manners, these stem not from his having lived under Hui-tsung, but from the variety of his painting in the late twelfth century.

³¹ Teng Ch'un and Chuang Su, *Hua-chi, Hua-chi pu-i* (annotated by Huang Miao-tzu 黃苗子), Peking, 1963. The passage quoted is in the *Hua-chi pu-i* section, p. 12.

³² See footnote 1.

DATED LI TI PAINTINGS

The paintings in parentheses of 1193 and 1196 are taken from Hsü Pang-ta 徐邦達, *Li-tai liu-chuan shu-hua tso-p'in pien nien-piao* 歷代流傳書畫 作品 編 年表 Shanghai, 1963, pp. 4, 236. The author has seen them and attests to their authenticity.

- 1174 "Herdboy and Buffaloes in a Rainstorm,"
Palace Museum, Taichung.
- 1174 "Kitten," Palace Museum, Taichung.
- 1187 "Shrike on a Winter Branch," Shanghai Museum.
- (1193 "Cat," album-leaf, in album collection, "Ming-hsien pao-hui" 名賢寶繪, recorded in Li Tso-hsien 李佐賢, *Shu-hua chien-ying* 書畫鑒影.)
- (1196 "Hawk Watching Pheasants," Ying k'uei chih t'u 鷹窺雉圖, recorded in Hsü Pang-ta 徐邦達 *Ku-tai shu-hua kuo-mu hui-k'ao* 古代書畫過目彙考.)³³
- 1197 "Dog," Peking.
- "Two Chicks," Peking.
- "Red Hibiscus," National Museum, Tokyo.
- "White Hibiscus," National Museum, Tokyo.

³³ Appearing too late for inclusion in this paper, a color reproduction has been published in *Ku-Kung po-wu yüan tsang hua-mao hua hsüan* 故宮博物院藏花鳥畫選 ("A selection of bird and flower paintings from the collection of the Palace Museum"), Peking, 1965, pl. 8. This large painting (189 cm. high by 209.5 cm. wide) is of extreme interest. All that can be suggested here is that it would seem to make still more secure the kind of artistic personality I have tried to reveal in this essay.

PLATES



Magpies and Hare. Ts'ui Po. 1061.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



Birds in a Thicket of Bamboo and Prunus. 12th century.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



Shrike on a Winter Branch. Signed Li Ti. 1187.
Shanghai Museum.



Shrike. Li An-chung. *Ca.* 1110. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



Shrike. Detail of plate 3.



Bamboo and Rock under an Oak Tree. Signed Li Ti.
(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



Bamboo and Oak. Detail of plate 1.



FIG. 1.—Travellers among Mountains and Streams. Detail. Fan K'uan.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



FIG. 2.—Travellers in the Mountains. Detail. Attributed to Kuan T'ung.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



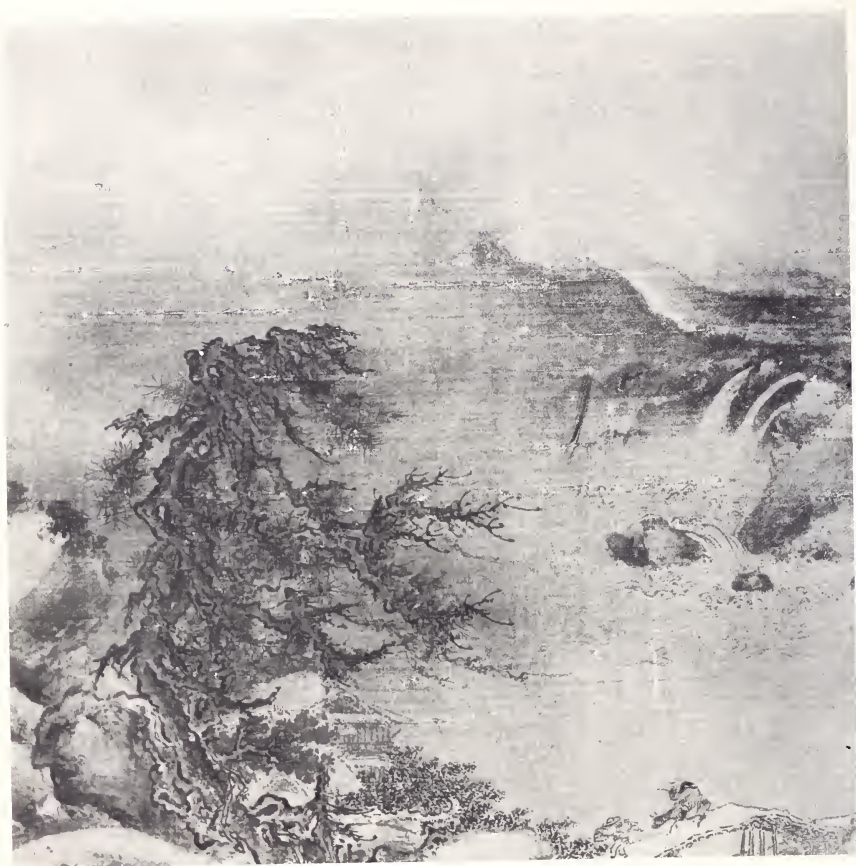
Whispering Pines in the Mountains. Detail. Li T'ang. 1124.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



Birds in a Tree above a Cataract. Signed Li Ti.
(Courtesy of Mrs. A. Dean Perry, Cleveland.)



Mandarin Ducks under Winter Trees. Anonymous.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



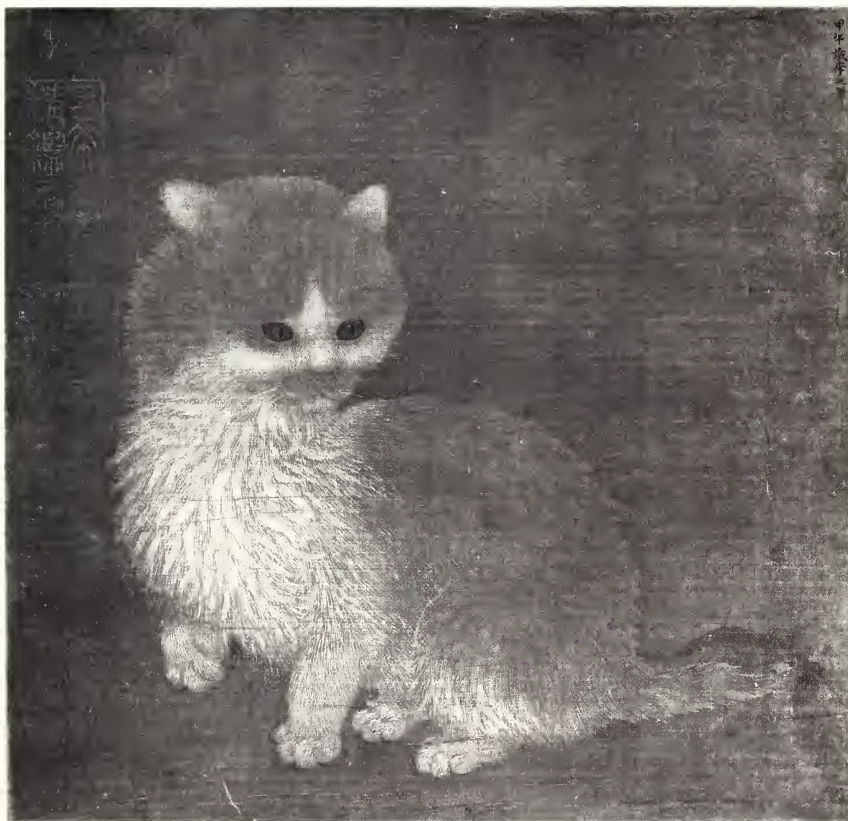
Landscape. Attributed to Li Shan. (Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.)



Birds on a Winter Tree. Anonymous. (Courtesy of John M. Crawford, New York.)



Herdboys and Buffaloes in a Rainstorm. Signed Li Ti. 1174.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



Kitten. Signed Li Ti. 1174. (Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)

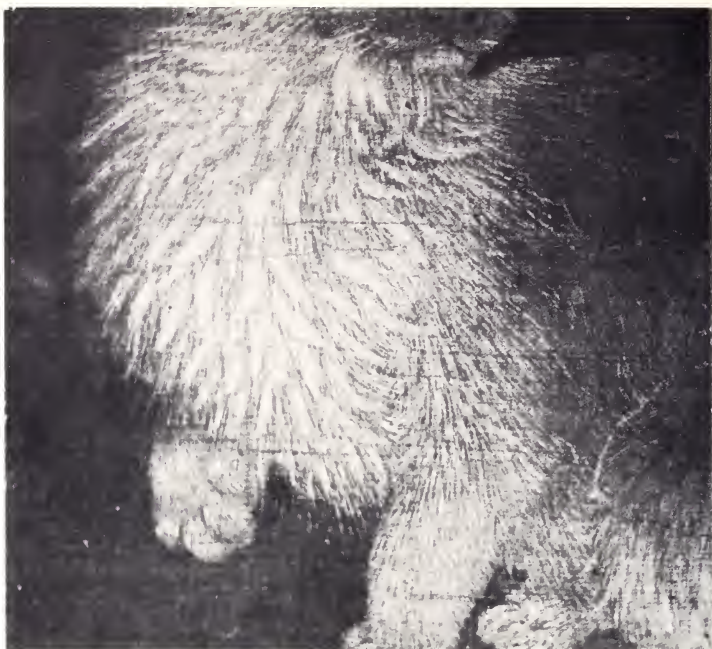


FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 15.



FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 14.



Hunter with a Pheasant Returning through the Snow. Signed Li Ti.
(Courtesy of Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.)



Hunter with a Hare Returning through the Snow. Signed Li Ti.
(Courtesy of Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.)

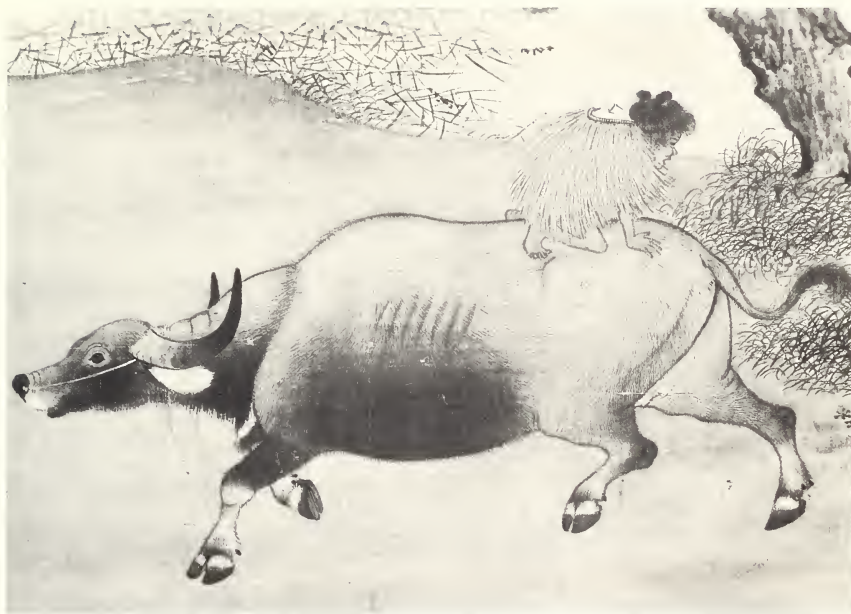


FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 14.



FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 17.



Boy with a Pheasant Returning through the Snow (Boy on a Water Buffalo Carrying a Ring-Necked Pheasant). (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.)

4453

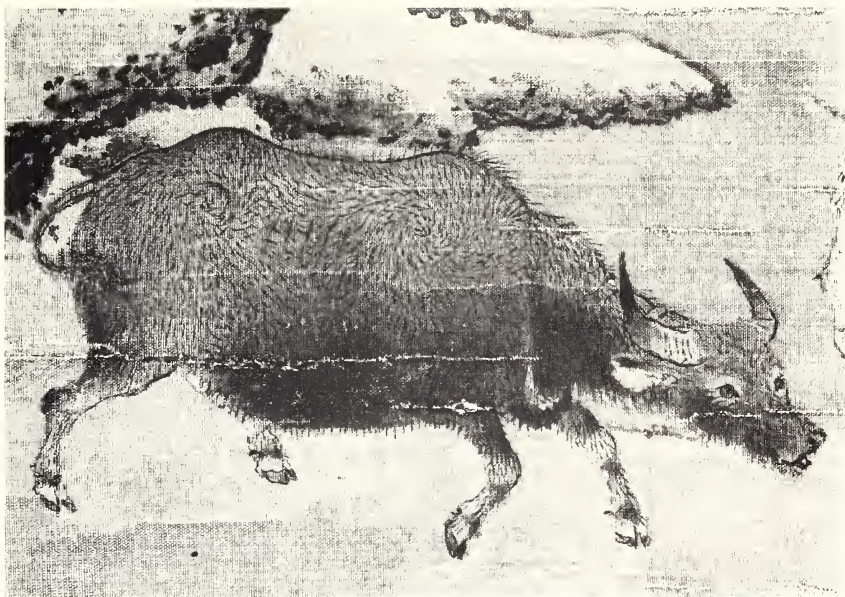


FIG. 1.—Detail of plate 18.



FIG. 2.—Detail of plate 20 (Reversed.)



FIG. 1.—Winter Buffaloes. Detail. Attributed to Yen Tzu-p'ing. China.



FIG. 2.—Drunken Scholar Returning Home. Detail. Post-12th century.
(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



Dog. Signed Li Ti. 1197. Peking.



Hunters with Greyhounds. Detail. Attributed to Hu Huai.
(Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Taichung.)



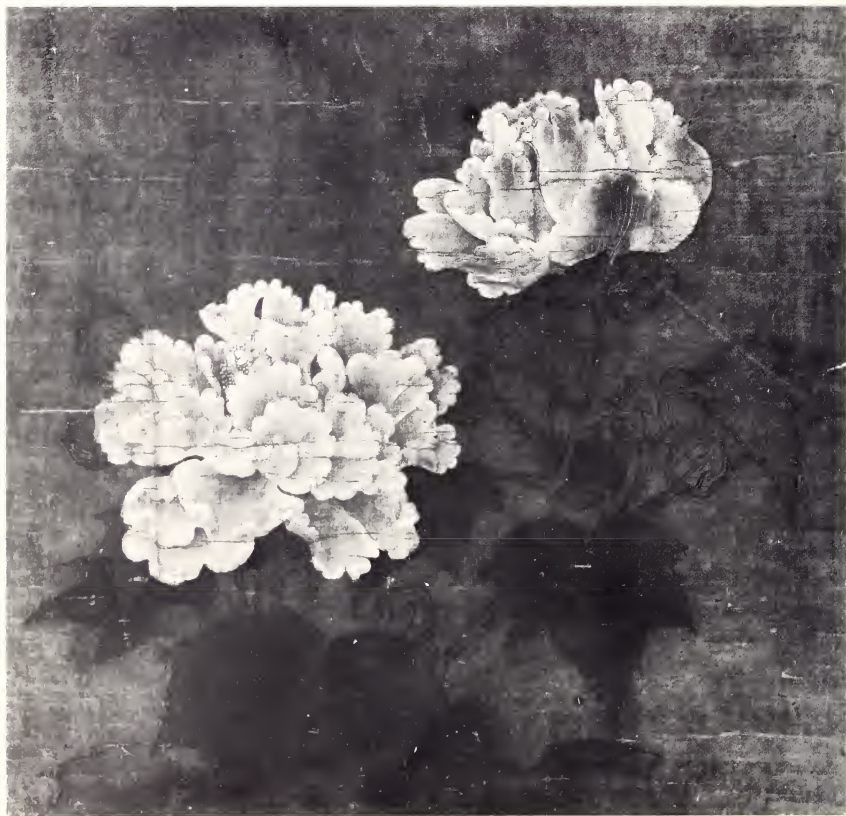
Dog. Yüan dynasty. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



Two Chicks. Signed Li Ti. 1197. Peking.



Detail of plate 6.



Red Hibiscus. Signed Li Ti. 1197. (Courtesy of National Museum, Tokyo.)



White Hibiscus. Signed Li Ti. 1197. (Courtesy of National Museum, Tokyo.)

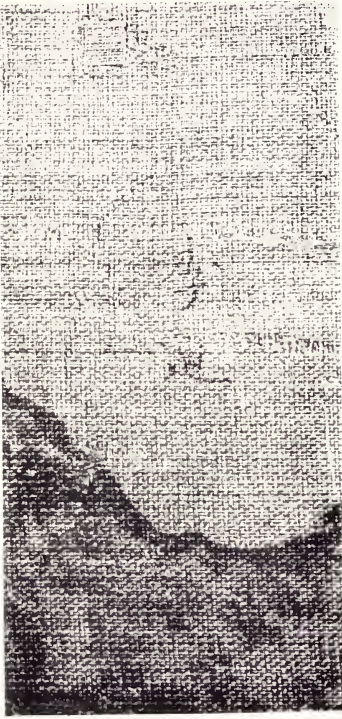


FIG. 1.—From plate 6.



FIG. 2.—From plate 10.

Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.)

Signatures courtesy of the respective collectors.

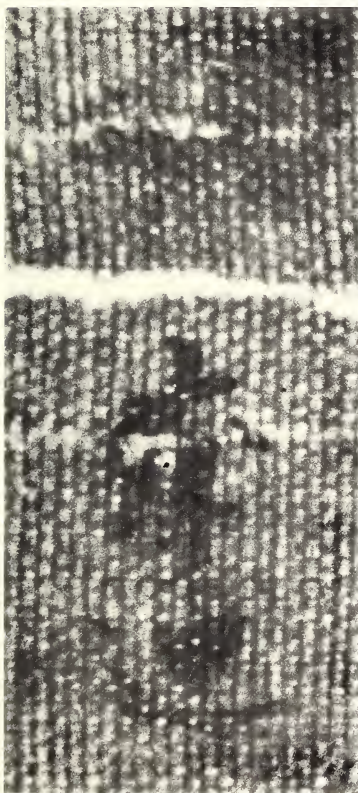


FIG. 1.—From plate 17.

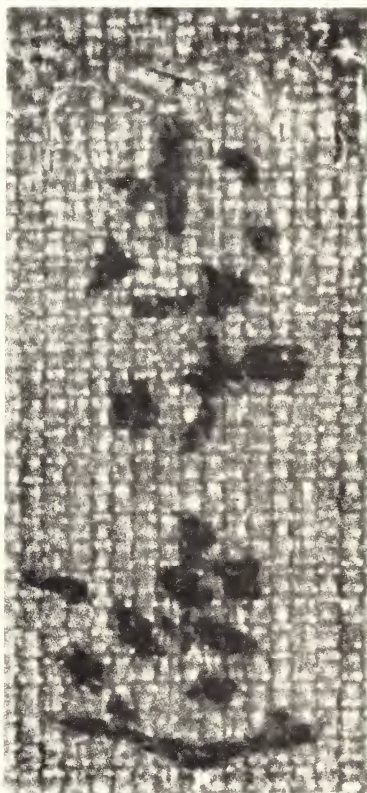


FIG. 2.—From plate 18.

Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.)
Signatures courtesy of the respective collectors.



FIG. 1.—From plate 14.

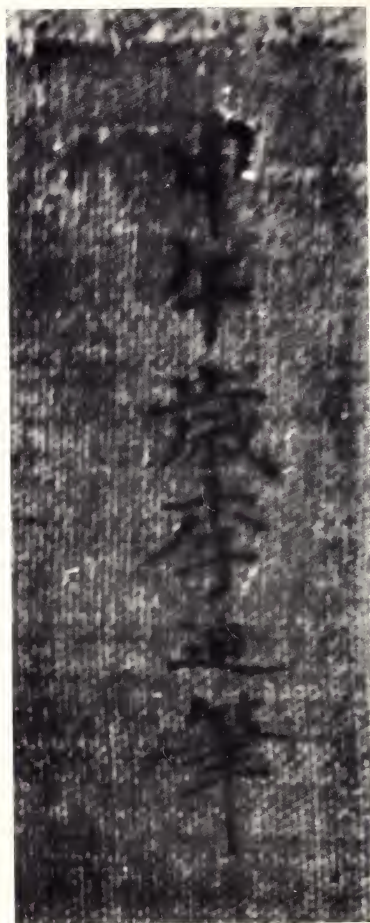


FIG. 2.—From plate 15.

Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.)
Signatures courtesy of the respective collectors.

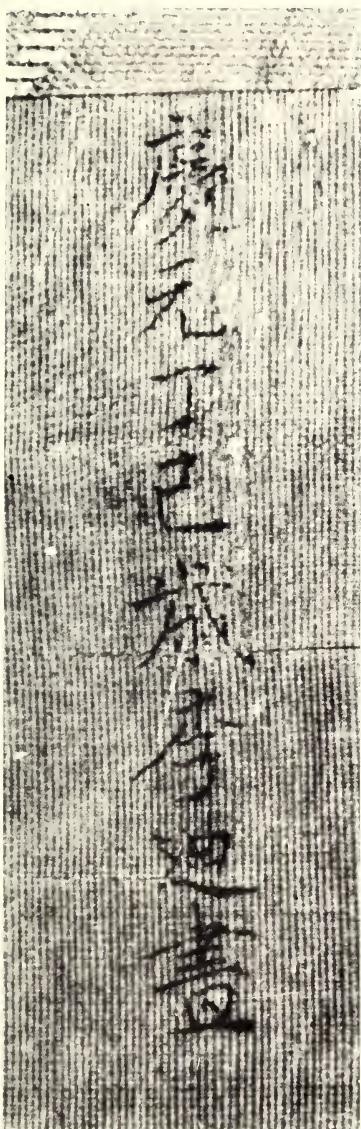


FIG. 1.—From plate 28.

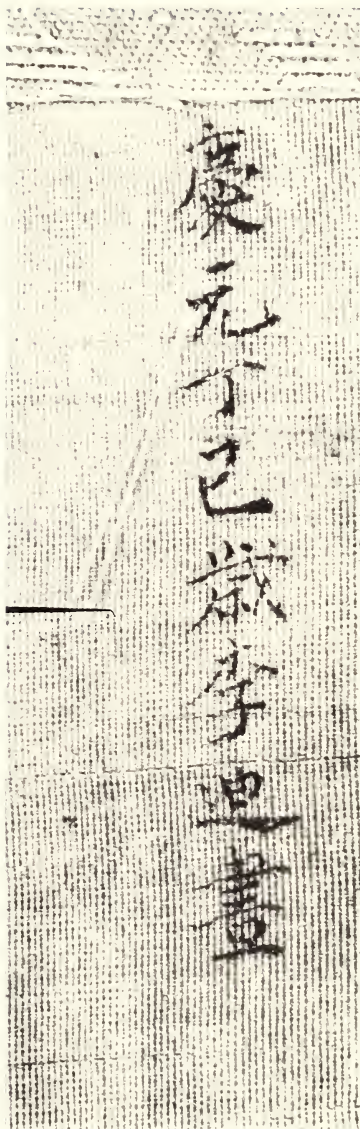


FIG. 2.—From plate 29.

Li Ti Signatures. (The signatures are not actual size.)

Signatures courtesy of the respective collectors.

INDEX

This index has been compiled with special reference to bibliographical data, proper names, and specific terms.

An *n* following a page number refers to a footnote citation appearing on that page.

- Academy, 15, 40
 - Southern, 26*n*
- Art and Architecture of China, The*, 3*n*, 33*n*
- Art of Southern Sung China, The*, 19*n*, 21*n*
- Ashikaga Shoguns, 26
- "Bamboo and Rock under an Oak Tree," 11, 15-20, 37
- Birds
 - "Birds in a Thicket of Bamboo and Prunus," 12, 13, 20
 - "Birds in a Tree above a Cata-ract," 11, 18-20, 19*n*
 - "Birds on a Winter Tree," 11, 19, 19*n*, 21
- Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 11, 15-16, 16*n*
- Buffaloes
 - "Boy on a Water Buffalo Carrying a Ring-Necked Pheasant," 28-30
 - "Buffaloes Going Home' by Li Ti" 26*n*
 - "Herdboys and Buffaloes in the Rainstorm," 23-25, 27, 29, 43
 - "Hunters Returning through the Snow," 25-31, 34, 38
- Cahill, James, 19*n*, 21*n*, 28*n*, 34*n*
- "Cat," 43
- Ch'an Buddhism, 26, 28, 28*n*
- Chao I, 6*n*
- Chao Ch'ang, 11*n*
- Chao Ch'ien-li, 7*n*
- Chao Hsi-ku, 7*n*
- Chao Kan, 13*n*
- Chao Shih-ku, 4
- "Chao Yü's Pacification of the Bar-barians," 21*n*
- Chao Yung, 33*n*
- Ch'en Shan, 5
- Ch'eng-chung-lang, 7, 8*n*
- Chiang-hsia, 5*n*
- "Chicks" (Two Chicks), 30, 33, 35, 43
- Ch'ien-t'ang, 40
- Ch'ien-tao, 5*n*
- Chin, 20-21, 21*n*
- Chinese Album Leaves*, 28*n*
- Chinese Art*, 3*n*
- Chinese Art Treasures*, 12*n*, 14*n*, 21*n*, 25*n*, 33*n*
- Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, 19*n*
- Chinese Landscape Painting*, 3*n*
- Chinese Painting*, 8*n*, 26*n*, 34*n*
- Chinese Paintings with Sung Dated Inscriptions*, 8*n*
- Ch'ing-chiu shih chi-chu*, 10*n*
- Chishaku-in, 19*n*
- Chou Mi, 5, 7*n*
- Chuang Su, 40, 41*n*
- Chuan-teng lu*, 28*n*
- Chu chia pi pei*, 7*n*
- Chüeh-chü, 10*n*
- Chu Mou-yin, 10*n*
- Chu yu, 7*n*
- Chung-kuo hua chia jen-ming ta-tz'u tien*, 6*n*
- Chung-kuo hua lun lei-pien*, 6*n*
- Cleveland Museum, 16*n*, 18*n*
- Crawford, John M., Jr., 11, 19*n*

- "Dog," 30-32, 35, 43
 "Dog" (Boston), 32
 "Dove, Tree and Flowers," 11*n*
 Dubosc, J. P., 3*n*

 Edwards, Richard, 18*n*
Essays in Zen Buddhism, 28*n*

 Fan Kuan, 17, 18*n*
 Freer Gallery of Art, 21*n*, 28, 29
 Fu-shih, 8*n*

 "Gazing at a Waterfall," 33*n*
 Golden Girdle, 7

 Hackney, Louise, 21*n*
 Hangchou, 5, 6*n*, 15, 16*n*, 23, 30, 41
 Academy of, 23ff., 30
 Harada Kinjirō, 19*n*
 Harvard, 8*n*
 "Hawk Watching Pheasant," 43
 Hibiscus, 37
 "Red Hibiscus," 30, 33-35, 43
 "White Hibiscus," 30, 33-35, 43
 Hightower, J. R., 10*n*
 Ho-yang (Hoyang), 6, 10*n*, 11*n*, 17
 Ho, Wai-kam, 16*n*
 Hsia Kuei, 5
 Hsia Wen-yen, 6, 8, 8*n*, 35, 40
 Hsiao Chao, 7*n*
 Hsiao-tsung, 7, 15, 40
 Hsieh Po-ch'eng, 33*n*
 Hsü Hsi, 10*n*, 11*n*
Hsü-chai ming-hua lu, 13*n*
 Hsü Pang-ta, 43
 Hsüan-ho, 6, 8
Hsüeh-shu han-ch'in t'u, 13*n*
Hua-chi, 4, 40, 41*n*
Hua-chi pu-i, 40, 41*n*
Hua-chien, 5, 7*n*
Hua shan-shui chüeh, 4, 5*n*
Hua-shih hui-yao, 10*n*
 Huang (the 18th), 6*n*
 Huang Miao-tzu, 41*n*
 Hui-ch'ung, 20
 Hui-tsung, 13, 14, 15, 16, 32*n*, 41

Introduction to Chinese Art, An, 3*n*

 Jui-ssu tung ko, 16

 Kaifeng, 16*n*, 39
 Kao Ch'i (Kao Chi-ti), 9, 10*n*, 31, 31*n*
 Kao-tsung, 16*n*, 40
 "Kitten," 23-25, 38, 43
Ko, 16*n*
Kokka, 26*n*, 34*n*, 40*n*
Kokuhō jizō, 26*n*
 Kuan T'ung, 18, 18*n*
 Kuang-tsung, 7, 8, 40
Ku-kung po-xu yüan tsang hua-mao hua hsüan, 43*n*
Ku-kung shu-hua chi, 11*n*
Ku-kung shu-hua lu, 11*n*, 19*n*, 20*n*
Ku-tai shu-hua kuo-mu hui-k'ao, 43
 Kuo Hsi, 21

Landscape Art of Li T'ang, The, 18*n*
 "Landscape with Fisherman," 33*n*
 Lee, Sherman, 3*n*
 Li An-chung, 5, 7*n*, 14, 15*n*, 38
 Li Chao-tao, 9*n*
 Li Ch'eng, 6*n*, 21
 Li Ch'eng-sou, 4, 4*n*, 6*n*
 Li Chui, 6*n*
 Li E, 7*n*
 Li Lin-ts'an, 9*n*
 Li Po, 5*n*, 6*n*
 Li Shan, 21, 21*n*
 Li Ssu-hsün, 9*n*
Li-tai liu-chuan shu-hua tso-p'in pien ncin-piao, 43
 Li T'ang, 4, 5, 7*n*, 17, 18, 28*n*
 Li Te-mao, 8, 21
 Li Tso-hsien, 43
 Li-tsung, 23*n*
 Lin Ch'un, 5
 Liu Ch'un, 6*n*
 Liu I, 6*n*
 Liu Sung-nien, 5
Loan Exhibition of Chinese Paintings, 21*n*
 Loehr, Max, 8*n*, 16*n*, 23*n*, 27, 27*n*

 Ma Ho-chih, 5
 Ma Lin, 5
 Ma Yüan, 5
 "Magpies and Hare," by Ts'ui Po, 12-13
 Malraux, A, 3*n*, 41

- "Mandarin Ducks under Winter Trees," 20
Mei-shu t'sung-shu, 7*n*
 Meyer, Mrs. Eugene, 21*n*
Meisterwerke chinesischer malerei aus der Higashiyama Sammlung, 26*n*
 Ming, 23*n*, 26*n*, 31
 "Ming-hsien pao-hui," 43
 Ming-huang, 6*n*, 9*n*
 "Ming-hui chi-chen," 19*n*
 Mongol Conquest, 5
 Mote, F. W., 31*n*
 "Mountain and River Landscape," 21*n*

Nan-Sung yüan hua-lu, 7*n*
 Ning-tsung, 35, 40
 "Noble Scholar in an Autumn Grove," 33*n*

Pagcant of Chinese Painting, A, 19*n*
 Pai-chung, 28
 Painting Academy, 6-7
 P'ang Yüan-ch'i, 11, 13*n*
 Perry, Mrs. A. Dean, 11, 19
Poet Kao Ch'i, The, 31*n*
Portfolio of Chinese Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 16*n*
Problem of Hui Tsung, The, 32*n*

 "Red Cliff, The," 21*n*
 Rowland Benjamin, Jr., 32*n*

 Shan-shui chüeh, 6*n*
 Shanghai Museum, 11, 10*n*
Shanghai po-wu-kuan tsang-hua, 13*n*
 Shao-hsing, 5*n*, 7
 Sheng Mou, 33*n*
 Shimbi Taiken, 26*n*
 "Shrike," by Li An-chung, 14
 "Shrike on a Winter Branch," 11, 12, 13-18, 38, 43
Shu-hua chien-ying, 43
Shu hua shu-lu chieh-t'i, 6*n*
 Shun-yu, 8
Shuo-fu, 7*n*
 Sickman, 3*n*, 19*n*, 33*n*
 Siren, Osvald, 8, 8*n*, 11*n*, 26*n*, 34*n*
 "Snow-Covered Landscape, A," 21*n*
Sōgen no kaiga, 19*n*, 26*n*, 34*n*

 Soper, Alexander, 3*n*, 33*n*
 Speiser, Werner, 26*n*
Ssu-pu-pei-yao, 10*n*
 "Streams and Mountains without End," 18*n*
Study of Chinese Paintings in the Collection of Ada Small Moore, A, 21*n*
Study of the Masterpiece, "Tang Ming-huang's Journey to Shu, A," 9*n*
 Su Ch'i, 7*n*
 Su Han-ch'en, 5
 Su Tung-p'o, 9
 Sullivan, 3*n*
 Sung, 40
 Northern, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20-21, 26*n*, 37, 38, 40
 Southern, 1, 3, 5, 9, 18, 19, 21*n*, 24*n*, 26*n*, 28, 28*n*, 34, 37, 38, 40, 41
 "Sung-Yüan ming-hui," 20*n*
 Su Shih, 9
 Suzuki, Daisetz, 28*n*
 Szechuan, 9*n*

 Ta-an, 28
Ta-feng-t'ang ming chi, 33*n*
tai-chao, 8, 9
 Tajima Shuchi, 26*n*
 Taichung, 20
 Palace Museum, 11*n*, 13*n*, 20, 21*n*, 23
 T'ang, 9*n*, 28
 T'ang Hou, 5, 7*n*
 T'ang Ming-huang, 9*n*
 Tao Tsung-i, 7*n*
 Teng Ch'un, 4, 40, 41*n*
 "Thatched Lodge in the Autumn Hill," 33*n*
Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting in the Palace Museum, 13*n*
Tieh-wang shan-hu, 7*n*
tien, 16*n*
 Ting Ping, 7*n*, 16*n*
 Tomita, Kōjirō, 16*n*
Topics in Chinese Literature, 10*n*
Tōyō bijutsu taikan, 26*n*
 "Travelers in the Mountains," 17-18

- Tseng, H. C., 16*n*, 21*n*
 Ts'ui Hsing-tsu, 5*n*
Ts'ui Po, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 38
ts'un, 17
 ts'ung-shu, 7*n*
T'u hui pao-chien, 6, 8*n*
 Tu Mu, 7*n*
Tung-t'ien ch'ing lu, 7*n*, 4
Tung-t'ien ch'ing-lu chi, 7*n*
Tu-sheng shu-hua chih yin (?), 16*n*

 Van Gulik, R. H., 16*n*

 Wang, C. C., 1
 Wang Meng, 33*n*
 Wang Sheng, 5*n*, 6*n*
Wang-shih shu-hua yüan, 5*n*
 "Waterfall," 19*n*
 Wen Cheng-ming, 26*n*
 Wen-tsung, 16*n*
 Willets, William, 3*n*
 "Wind and Snow in the Fir-Pines,"
 21*n*

 "Winter Bird on the snow-covered
 tree," 13*n*
 Wu-ch'ang, 5*n*, 6*n*
Wu-lin ch'ang ku ts'ung-pien, 7*n*
Wu-lin chiu shih, 5, 7*n*
 Wu Ping, 5
 Wu Tse, 7*n*
 Wu Yüan-chih, 21*n*

Yamato bunka, 26*n*
 Yamato Bunkakan, 25, 26*n*, 28, 31, 34,
 38
 Yang Lien-sheng, 8*n*
 Yashiro Yukio, 26*n*, 38, 38*n*
 Yau Chang-foo, 21*n*
 Yeh Meng-te, 9*n*
 Yen Tzu-p'ing, 29
 Yen Wen-kuei, 18*n*
 Ying k'uei chih t'u, 43
 Yonezawa Yoshiho, 40
 Yü Chien-hua, 6*n*, 7*n*
 Yü Shao-sung, 6*n*
 Yüan, 5, 6*n*, 16*n*, 32, 32*n*, 40
 Yüan Wen-tsung, 15

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